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KOREAN WOMENS VOICE: THE VOCAL MUSIC OF YOUNG-JA LEE

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KOREAN WOMEN'S VOICE:

THE VOCAL MUSIC OF YOUNG-JA LEE

by

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ABSTRACT

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The focus of this dissertation is on the vocal music of Young-Ja Lee, the most important Korean woman composer of our time, within the context of the history of Korean Western music with special attention given to her songs. Many Korean women composers of Western music invested great efforts to incorporate the musical elements of Korean traditional music into their compositions, and define "Koreanness" despite the challenges that they faced within a male-dominated society. Korean women have faced different experiences and challenges from their male counterparts, and thus the art of Korean women offers us a unique insight into Korean society and its modern culture.

Young-Ja Lee's music combines the musical elements of French, West African, Indonesian gamelan, and traditional Korean music, thus creating some of the finest examples of interculturalism. Her vocal music is not only microcosm of her music, but also the story of Korean women because she selects poems that tell the stories of the lives of Korean women. Young-Ja Lee has composed a number of songs on the poems by one renowned Korean woman poet, Nam-Jo Kim, because she found a direct connection to these poems; as a result, these songs are a direct reflection of Young-Ja Lee's life as a woman and as a composer. In this paper, I have selected two songs by Young-Ja Lee that best represent Lee's music and a women's perspective on the lives of women in Korea, as seen through her music and the poems that inspired her songs.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Since Korea's liberation from the thirty-six-year Japanese occupation in 1945, the country has been shaken to its core by a quick succession of major political and social events. Just as with all its people, Korean musicians, especially composers, were directly and indirectly influenced by these events and their music reflected the impact of the experiences they endured. The economic hardship and political chaos that ensued after the devastating Korean War made the lives of native composers very difficult, and the waves of new culture and music from the United States and Western European countries that poured into Korean society made finding their own musical voices challenging.

Most Korean composers of Western music from this era started their music studies in the Christian schools established in Korea by American missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century, and continued their studies abroad, mostly in the United States and Japan. Many of them composed Western music without any Korean musical identity, instead writing music in the style and trend of other Western composers, past and present. Many others, however, expressed their desire to go beyond imitating the musical style of Western composers. From the beginning of their careers as composers and teachers, the latter group showed a strong interest and commitment to incorporating a Korean spirit and traditional musical elements into the Western music that they composed. This approach was similar to that of the Nationalistic music of Europe—Russia, England, Czechoslovakia, and other countries—where composers tried to write their music in pre-existing traditional Western music forms, infused with their own nationalistic folk elements. The end result was the beginning of Korean Western music, and the first step towards an Intercultural style embodying both traditions. Music from the composers of

this era exhibits the structure and form of Western Classical music, enhanced with Korean traditional musical elements. These elements include rhythmic patterns, pentatonic scales, melodic modes, unique ornaments, vibrato, and the mimicking of Korean traditional instruments by using conventional modern Western instruments unconventionally to imitate the sound of traditional Korean instruments. The composers writing in this style also served as teachers, mentors, and role models for the younger generation of Korean composers. They not only taught their protégés Western music, but also encouraged the students to incorporate Korean traditional musical elements into their Western-style music, challenging them to find new directions of their own. During the 1950s and 60s, Korean composers of Western music were also strongly influenced by the efforts of composers of traditional Korean music, known as Guk-Ak (국악), at the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (국립국악원).

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Western music scene in Korea was dominated by male musicians and composers. The appearance of any significant women composers in Korea did not take place until the 1960s, and it was mainly due to several social factors and changes in Korean society. Western music education for women began around the same time as for men in Korea, and the Ewha School (later to become Ewha Womans University[1]), was responsible for this. Established by the American Missionary Mary F. Scranton, Ewha began to offer music classes in 1891 and a music degree at the college level in 1925. However, most women stopped pursuing a music career upon marriage, or they became teachers to meet Korean social demands and expectations. The

[1] The unconventional use of "Womans" was done by Ewha's founder Mary F. Scranton to place the importance of the individual woman and signify that it is a school created by a group of individual woman.
http://inews.ewha.ac.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=14558 (accessed February 10 2012)

idea of a formal education for women was still a very new concept in Korean society, and pursuing a career as an artist was also very difficult because it was a path that would interfere with the expectation for a traditional Korean woman, which was that of a supportive wife and devoted mother. Even for the few women musicians and composers who performed and composed professionally, the opportunity to be recognized for their work was very limited within a male-dominated society. Fortunately, from the 1950s on, the opportunity for women to receive a higher education and pursue a career in Korea grew steadily. With each passing decade, the number of Korean women composers increased to the point where today they are the dominant force in Western music composition in Korea. Approximately 70-75% of composition students at the majority of major universities in Korea are females, and about 70% of composers in Korea are women.[2] Their achievement has not been only in numbers. Their dominance is also evident in the quality of music they have produced, as well as the recognition they have received in the form of awards, commissions, reviews, grants, and performances, particularly outside of Korea. In a society that has been male-dominated for thousands of years, Korean women have faced different experiences and challenges than their male counterparts, and thus the music of these women composers offers us a unique insight into Korean society and its modern musical culture.

In this dissertation I discuss the life and music of the most significant Korean women composer within the context of the history of Korean Western music. Young-Ja Lee (b. 1931) is one of the most prolific and respected living Korean composers of all time. For over sixty years, she has influenced generations of younger Korean composers

[2] John Robison. *Interculturalism in the Music of Korean Women Composers, 1980-2002* http://www.hichumanities.org/AHproceedings/John%20O.%20Robison.pdf (accessed 15 January 2011).

through her music and teaching, while serving as a role model to Korean women composers. Known as the Face and Mother of Korean Modern Music, she was one of the six founding members of the Korean Society of Women Composers founded in 1981, and she was also its first president.[3] She has studied at Ewha Womans University, the Paris Conservatory, the Manhattan School of Music, the Brussels Royal Conservatory, and the University of Paris-Sorbonne. Her teachers included Tony Aubin, Noel Gallon, and Daniel Lesure. Her music reflects the strong background in counterpoint that she received from her studies in France and Belgium, along with the influence of composers such as Messiaen, Bartók, and Kodaly. Her creativity has been stimulated by her exposure to the music of diverse cultures: West African cultures of the Ivory Coast, the gamelan music of Indonesia, and contemporary music of the Netherlands and the United States. But it was her encounter and ensuing acquaintance with Dutch composer Ton de Leeuw in the late 1980s that inspired her to study the traditional music of her own country, and as a result, her recent compositions show the clear influence of Korean traditional music.

This dissertation focuses on Young-Ja Lee's vocal music composed on the poems by Nam-Jo Kim because it best represents her life, philosophy, and music. Poet Nam-Jo Kim (b. 1927) is known for her love poems written from a woman's perspective and for her elegant style that appeals to Koreans of all ages. Young-Ja Lee discovered Kim's poems and fell in love with them during the difficult years following the Korean War, and they have served as the roots of her life for over fifty years. Here Young-Ja Lee found a kindred spirit and a direct connection in their message of love and hope. Two songs are selected to demonstrate the distinctiveness of her music. Her treatment of the

[3] Translation by Kyoung Cho, from http://womancomposer.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=kwsc_history (accessed January 18 2011).

poetry offers us a deeper understanding of the composer's perspective towards life and art. They offer a special insight into the world of the composer, since they are a direct reflection of Young-Ja Lee's life as a woman and as a composer, illustrating the challenges she faced and overcame. Her journey as a woman and musician offers us a microcosm of the history of Korean women and Korean women composers in the twentieth century. They are the finest examples of the marriage of two art forms by two leading Korean artists. We will explore the artistic reflections of Korean women during the latter part of the twentieth century, and the vocal music that best presents the achievements of the first generation Korean women composers. This document will show that her vocal music is a fine example of Interculturalism, along with a profound Korean woman's perspective.

Chapter two includes a discussion of the history of Korean Western music, Korean composers, Korean women composers, and Korean art songs. It offers a background understanding of the past and present of Western music in Korea. This chapter also assists in the understanding of the life and music of Young-Ja Lee in the context of a larger scheme. Chapter three contains a biography of the composer and a discussion of her music. Because this document will discuss the living composer, her own words in the form of interviews will be included in the chapter. Poet Nam-Jo Kim is introduced in chapter four. Chapter five presents an analysis of two songs by Young-Ja Lee composed on the poems of Nam-Jo Kim. Young-Ja Lee and her music are not only among the finest examples of Interculturalism in music, but also represent the Korean-Western music of our time, along with a women's perspective on the lives of women in Korea, as seen through music.

CHAPTER II: WESTERN MUSIC IN KOREA AND ITS WOMEN COMPOSERS

History of Western Music in Korea and Lives of Korean Musicians

The Beginning

The history of music in Korea dates back at least to the first century B.C., as the Chinese historical literature from the fourth century, 後漢書 (Book of Later Han Kingdom), describes the Korean music of this period.[1] Until the Cho-Sun (1392–1910) dynasty's isolationism of more than five centuries ended in the late nineteenth century, the only foreign cultural and musical influences for Korea came from and through China. Although the influence of Chinese traditional music was clearly evident from the first century B.C. until the twelfth century, from the beginning Korean traditional music has always successfully integrated Chinese and other foreign musical elements to develop its own unique musical style. Korean music was even exported back to China and Japan.[2]

While the influence of Asian music was a gradual and natural process over several centuries and a voluntary one initiated by Koreans, the introduction of Western music that took place in the late nineteenth century was an abrupt change that came on the wings of the Western imperialism that forced Korea to open its ports to Japan, the United States, and other European countries. Although a few scholars witnessed and researched Western music during their visits to China and also through Chinese literature as early as the late eighteenth century, none of them actually studied, performed, or composed it. Christian missionaries from the United States were the first to introduce

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[1] Lee Joong-Jae. *Korean History recorded in Chinese Literatures* http://historia.tistory.com/1015 (accessed 11 February 2011).

[2] Han Myung-Hee. *Understanding Korean Traditional Music* http://www.hanstyle.com/hankukak/specialist/specialview.jsp?def=&seq=24&pageNum=2&pageSize=10&search=&keyword=&strCate=H6 (accessed 15 February 2011).

Western music to the general public in Korea. Horace Grant Underwood (1859-1916) and Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858-1902) brought hymns and Western folk songs.[3] Hymns were sung in churches, and a number of schools were founded rapidly by the missionaries, where Western music was one of the major subjects taught by missionaries and their wives. It is not surprising that most of the first generation Korean musicians, including the composers, came out of these schools. Another source of the Western music in Korea was Franz Von Eckert (1852–1916), a German bandmaster who helped establish the Korean Imperial Military Band in 1900. He played a similar role for the Japanese Imperial Military band twenty years earlier, composing the harmony for Japan's national anthem as well as the Anthem of the Korean Empire. The Korean Imperial Military Band and its members eventually became the leaders of Korean instrumental music.

A majority of the first-generation Korean composers of Western music continued their studies abroad. Although a few of them were able to study in the United States and Europe, most of them went to Japan because of its proximity, accessibility, logistics, and familial culture and language. The westernization of Japan began a few decades earlier than in Korea, and Japan was a convenient place to learn about the new culture and music. The trend to study Western music in Japan grew even more because of political changes in Korea. As Japanese power grew after their defeat of China and Russia, Korean sovereignty gradually was taken away by Japan, and Japan's occupation of Korea began through the coerced (and hence invalid) "Japan–Korea Treaty of 1910."

[3] Sa-Hun Chang, *The History of Korean Music* (Seoul: Se-Kwang Music Publishing, Inc., 1986), 481.

Japanese Occupation and Its Influence

During the occupation by Imperial Japan, Koreans were forced to think that everything Japanese, including musical heritages, was superior to Korean traditions. Japanese modernization of the nineteenth century was based on disparaging traditional Japanese culture and values in favor of modern and Western ideals. The Japanese also forced the same idea upon Koreans. Furthermore, as a part of Japanese efforts to erase the national identity of Korea, they banned everything Korean from being taught at schools, including the Korean language and music. What replaced them were the Japanese language and Western music composed by the Japanese, as well as the classical music of Germany (Japan's ally in World War II).

As Japanese music spread in Korea, Korean musicians began to invest their efforts in preserving and defining their Korean musical identity to counter the Japanese influence. These efforts were led by Korean traditional musicians as well as Korean Western musicians. Until that point, Korean traditional music for the court and aristocrats was written in *Chunggan-bo* (정간보井間譜) created in circa 1447 by King Se-Jong, and it is believed to be the first mensural notational system in Asia.[4] However, all other types of traditional music—Buddhist music, folk music, shaman music, etc.—were transmitted only by oral tradition. Also, because oral tradition was passed from the master to a very small number of students, often to only one student, the chance of the music being lost was very high during the time that Korean traditional music was losing ground. Through the benefit of the recording technology that was imported to Korea in 1910, not only was Korean traditional music saved, but it was also studied by Korean musicians, both

[4] *Chunggan-bo* http://www.mogencelab.com/jungganbo/sub_1.htm (accessed 15 February 2011).

traditional and Classically trained. The influence of Korean traditional music provided wonderful inspirations for the Korean Western musicians as they began to turn to folk music to express their Korean musical identity. They transcribed folk songs using the Western notation system and also composed music using elements from folk music—rhythmic patterns, pentatonic scales, melodic ideas, etc.[5] This was done during a difficult time for all Korean artists because the Japanese Imperial government forced all Korean artists to cooperate with their war efforts. Korean artists were told to create works glorifying the war and the sacrifices Koreans must make to ensure Japanese victory. Those who did not cooperate were virtually shunned from the artistic society otherwise or persecuted for their actions.

Independence and the Korean War

The independence of Korea came when Japan surrendered to the United States in August of 1945; Korean musicians now had creative freedom and the opportunity to study and teach Western music without Japanese influence. All areas of Western musical activities flourished in Korea, led by Korean musicians and also those who returned from abroad. Music education in schools was taught by Korean musicians who replaced the Japanese teachers, and new music textbooks written by Koreans were also introduced. The first co-ed college music program was also established at Seoul National University. Several orchestras, oratorio societies, choral organizations, and opera companies were founded. From 1945-1950, more music magazines were published than during the entire thirty-six years of Japanese occupation.

[5] More details in "Korean Art Songs"

Unfortunately the boom was short-lived due to the Korean War that began in 1950. Three years of devastating war not only laid waste to much of the country, but also caused the death of many leading musicians. They were also subject to abduction or defection to North Korea, and the division of music between the two Koreas began. The hardship of war also made the lives of Korean musicians very difficult, but the military musical organizations provided a platform for a fast recovery, and they later became the basis for the postwar musical organizations.

The Postwar Era of the 1950s and 60s

After the war, the 1950s were a time of rebuilding and laying the foundation for Korean-Western music in South Korea. General K-12 music education was established as well as the performing arts high school to educate young prodigies in music. Several universities established music schools and a few schools began to offer masters degrees in music. A number of orchestras made a successful transition from the military organization to the professional one. The *Experimental Music Society* and *Korean Society of Modern Music* were founded in 1952, while the *Contemporary Music Society in Seoul* was founded under the slogan "Establishment of Theory in New Korean National Music and International Musical Exchange to define Korea in the World of Music." The KSMM became the *Korean Association of Modern Music* in 1957, and under the leadership of Un-Yung La (1922-1993), it joined the *International Society for Contemporary Music* and served as its South Korean branch. Notable activities included the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra's "Night of Korean Composers" featuring new music by Korean composers, the first twelve-tone composition by Un-Yung La, and In-Chan Choi's first avant-garde composition concert. This period, however, was a time to look for the

possibilities in modern music. The meaningful composition and performance of modern music by Koreans began in the 1960s when the rebuilding of the war-torn country was finished and new waves of young composers surfaced with their international studies and activities.[6]

The Era of Studying Abroad, Modern Music, and New Directions

During the 1960s, a number of gifted young Korean performers went to the United States and Europe to further their studies and pursue their careers. Despite their severe lack of knowledge about the culture and language of new countries, and their extremely weak financial means, several of them attended prestigious music schools under renowned teachers, won major competitions, and moved on to have major careers. This trend continued to grow in the 1970s and 80s as the Korean economy began its boom. A cycle of studying abroad was established as more musicians who experienced the Western music in the United States and Europe came back to teach in Korea and their students were encouraged to follow in the footsteps of their teachers.

Korean composers also benefited from studying abroad. During the 1960s, Korean composers actively produced modern music and worked hard to follow the trends of modern world music such as electronic music, avant-garde music, and experimental music. Through the 1970s, Korean composers continued to learn from these new musical ideas, producing modern music in the style of European and American composers. However, they also began to realize the new possibilities in exploring and applying Korean traditional music and its elements into their new music. To their surprise, many Korean composers were encouraged by their non-Korean teachers to compose music with

[6] Chang, *The History of Korean Music*, 248.

Korean traditional musical elements. As a result, Korean composers began to create music combining the musical elements of East and West as well as modern and pre-modern music. Some composers wrote music that uses Korean traditional instruments, even with symphony orchestras. During the 1980s, the movement to create music with a unique Korean identity became an even stronger force for Korean composers. Their efforts began to bear fruit in the quality of the work, and recognition from the critics and musicians outside of Korea followed. The opportunity to experience Eastern European music and also that of North Korean composers freely opened up in the late 1980s due to the political changes in Korea that eliminated censorship in art. While these social and cultural changes that offered Korean artists the opportunity to explore their full artistic freedom for the first time, but it also presented a challenge in choosing new directions. Many Korean composers chose two main directions: individualism and interculturalism. Instead of pre-determining the nature of music based on a pre-existing idea or identity, the composer writes music to express his or her individual aesthetics. Likewise, because of the innate musical background of growing up in Korea and also the Western music education received, the end result is music that represents both cultures without conflict.

Korean Songs and Art Songs (Ga-Gok 가곡)

Korea has a long history of traditional vocal music both in court/aristocratic music and commoner's music that includes folk songs, labor songs, *Pansori*,[7] Buddhist chants,

[7] Pansori (판소리) or P'ansori, sometimes called Korean folk opera, a genre of narrative song of Korea, typically performed dramatically by a vocalist, accompanied by a puk (double-headed barrel drum). Built from the word p'an, meaning "open space," and sori, meaning "singing" or "sound," the term p'ansori itself is a reference to the markets, public squares, and other such open venues where performances originally took place. With a fan in hand, a *p'ansori* singer uses a combination of *ch'ang* (song), *sasŏl* (narration), and *pallim* (dramatic gesture) to tell a story. Meanwhile, the drummer provides the appropriate rhythmic setting for each song.
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/441485/pansori (accessed 22 February 2011).

and Shaman ritual songs. Singing has long been a central part of Korean culture. Even the fourth century Chinese history book mentions it: "Korea's culture enjoys singing, dancing, drinking, and playing 琵琶 (Asian Mandolin)."[8] The waves of Western culture that came to Korea at the end of the nineteenth century brought vocal music by the American Christian missionaries and instrumental music by a German bandmaster and composer. The first generation Korean composers were all students who studied with those individuals who brought Western music to Korea.

Chang-Ga (창가 唱歌)[9]

The first music Korean composers wrote were songs written at a time when Korea was in political and social turmoil. A new genre, "Chang-Ga" (Singing-Song) was developed by Korean composers to serve a purpose. It became very popular among Koreans thanks to its easy nature and closeness to the pentatonic scale and church hymns. During the time of political unrest in Korea caused by foreign imperialism, it was created to promote good moral values and patriotism in young Koreans. When the Japanese occupied Korea, only Japanese songs were taught and allowed to be sung in schools, so Chang-Ga served as a way for Koreans to keep their identity and were sung by the general public, especially as a group activity. Musically it was simple in melody and rhythm, strophic, in a military march style, and with the structure of a hymn or anthem (two or four lines of four measures each). It was written in both major and minor keys with pentatonic melodies that avoided semitones (C, D, E, G, A). The first music

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[8] Translation by Kyoung Cho from http://historia.tistory.com/1015 (accessed 22 February 2011).

[9] First Chang-Ga was composed in 1905 and it was gradually replaced by other vocal music, such as children's songs and Ga-Gok during the 1920s.

composed in a Western style by Korean composers, Chang-Ga helped Koreans get used to the sound of Western vocal music and contributed to the spread of vocal music to the general public. It also became the foundation to express the will and desire for Korea's independence from Japan.

Children's Songs

Korean composers also saw the dire need of Korean songs for the children who were learning and singing only Japanese songs at schools. In 1923, Jung-Hwan Bang founded "Saek-Dong Hoe,"[10] an organization to promote the welfare and education of Korean children. As one of its main activities, Saek-Dong Hoe published a special magazine for children and also children's songs. Virtually all leading Korean composers of the time joined in the efforts and composed several hundred songs, which they promoted at the churches where they served as Sunday school teachers and children's choir directors. Children's songs were important for the Korean musicians of the time and also for the development of Korean songs. Because the songs were written for children, the songs had to be easy and catchy, and thus the melody was very important. The composers had to learn to be selective and sensitive to the text to suit the nature and needs of the songs, so they collaborated closely with the poets. Because there were no precedents in music or poetry to serve the children, both composers and poets had to learn to develop the genre. As a result, it served as a platform for both groups to grow and gain experience in their art. The most important benefit of their efforts was the establishment of the foundation of Western music and also vocal music for generations of Koreans. Children's songs continued their success even further after the Japanese

[10] The word "Saek-Dong" is derived from the name of Korean traditional children's cloth in five colors and "Hoe" means "Society."

occupation through the K-12 educational system, which required weekly music classes where singing was virtually the only activity, and also through mass media support.

Art Songs (Ga-Gok 가곡歌曲)

The 1920s marks the beginning of the Korean Art Song tradition, "Ga-Gok" (예술가곡 藝術歌曲, hereafter referred to as 가곡 歌曲, the more popular shorter form in Korea). In comparison to Chang-Ga or children's songs, Korean art songs were composed with artistic and musical aesthetics inspired by the art songs of European countries. Many songs of the 1920s were crude in their musical merits, but the composers' skills began to improve in time and by the 1930s, hundreds of songs were composed. Many of them showed musical maturity and sensibility to the poem, as well as the individual characteristics of each composer. Together with the songs composed in the 1920s, the art songs of the 1930s laid the foundation for the Korean art songs of this era, which had several characteristics that set the tone for the genre.[11] First, melody was one of the most important elements of the song, especially memorable tunes. Second, just as important as the melody were the lyrics and poetry that evoke the emotions that the listener would relate to and associate with melancholy, old memory of hometown, longing for lost love or mother, lost country, etc. As a result, composers chose poems with emotional strength in most cases and most songs were lyrical, romantic, and melancholy.

There were several reasons for these trends. First, traditional Korean music has no harmony, so the melody was one of the two most important elements in music along with the rhythm. In traditional vocal music, the rhythmic idea was provided by the percussion,

[11] Chang, *The History of Korean Music,* 110.

while the melody was the center of the song and also the key element in conveying the story and emotion. Korean art songs naturally focus on melody. Second, Western music was introduced to Korean composers by American missionaries, with church hymns from the turn of the century and European music of the Classical and Romantic periods, by a German military bandmaster. The lyrical, poetic, and emotional nature of the Classical and Romantic eras, as well as the harmonic language of the hymns, was adapted naturally by Korean song composers. Third, Korean art songs of the time were composed to express not only the artistic view or emotion of the poet and composer, but also to represent the pain and sorrow of the Korean people who were occupied and oppressed by foreign powers. Composers wrote songs with recognizable melodies that would touch the heart of the listeners.

It is not a coincidence that Koreans find affinity with the spirituals and Russian folk songs, both of which came out of peoples oppressed with difficult lives. Throughout the Japanese occupation the growth of Ga-Gok continued to expand thanks to the spread of recording technology and radio, as well as increased live performances by classically trained singers, despite the Japanese ban and censorship of many Ga-Gok. The 1940s were a very difficult time for Korean composers: as Japan entered the Pacific War in 1941, they forced all Korean artists to participate in war efforts, and they were pressured to create propaganda art to glorify the war and encourage young Koreans to serve in the war. Refusing to cooperate meant being banned from having a career as an artist, and then being sent to the most hostile war front, which in most cases meant certain death. However, those who cooperated received lucrative benefits to advance their careers. Many leading artists yielded, including the composers, even the ones who used to lead

patriotic efforts for Korea's independence through their music. It was a dark time for Korean composers because they had to betray their patriotism and also their artistic conscience. Furthermore, their development as song composers was halted, while their experience writing songs of a military nature bleeds into their music and the nature of many Ga-Gok for the next few decades.

Liberation from the Japanese occupation opened up a golden era of Ga-Gok. Korean composers now had the freedom to compose and teach the music they believed in, and many composers who could not be active were now able to be a part of musical creation in Korea. A number of musicians came back to Korea from abroad, which added fresh, new energy leading to the creation of professional organizations and concerts by professional musicians. Composers supplied numerous Ga-Gok and began to make efforts to create a Korean identity in their songs. Several ideas were tried to achieve this identity, although all songs retained the importance of a melody that is lyrical and emotional. The ideas were mainly based on the fusion of Korean traditional musical elements, such as pentatonic scales, rhythmic patterns, melodic lines with melisma, etc., into their songs. Another idea was to write songs based on Korean folk songs, through either the transcription of existing folk songs with newly added piano accompaniment, or the composition of new songs using borrowed materials. However, the most common approach was to find inspiration from poetry reflecting a Korean identity. Naturally, composers selected poems with Korean themes, folk elements, and rural nostalgia. Most of these songs were written on Western music foundations with Korean traditional elements added when the poems called for a Korean identity.

The Korean War (1950 – 1953) was an extremely harsh experience for all Koreans. Most of the country was turned to rubble and millions of people died. The war lasted for three years, and millions of lives were lost and the country was ruined. However, Korean musicians showed incredible resilience and revived their musical activities rapidly despite the economical hardship. Many musicians worked with and for the military organizations, and composers once again composed many military songs as they did for the Japanese. In addition to the songs in military style, one major change happened to the Korean art song scene after the war. Western culture poured into Korea faster than ever before due to the post-war aid and renewed diplomatic ties with the United States and other European countries. Also, because the war broke down the traditional social classes, new culture was adapted quicker with little resistance. This helped Korean composers to learn more about the modern Western music of the time and encouraged them to compose music beyond the Classical and Romantic styles.

Challenged by the foreign composers who presented modern music in Korea from the 1960s and on, the movement to compose music in contemporary styles began to rise. By the 1970s, Korean composers were producing modern music of high quantity and quality. Some composers were winning prizes and awards at international composition competitions and festivals. The growth of Korean composers continued in the 1980s when electronic music gained a foothold. However, Ga-Gok composition took a very different path from instrumental music. The 1960s and 1970s were the golden years for Ga-Gok in its popularity among Korean audiences. As the country recovered from the war, more universities were established and many of them added music departments to their programs. By the 1960s, the number of music programs at universities grew to over

one hundred. The demands for voice teachers in Korea grew rapidly, and a number of Korean singers who studied and pursued a career abroad came back to Korea to teach. They led the efforts to promote Ga-Gok to the audiences coupled with the growth of mass media, such as radio, television, and the recording industry. As a result, Ga-Gok became the songs of the Korean people, and its popularity even led commercial pop singers to sing and record Ga-Gok. However, the popularity of Ga-Gok encouraged composers to indulge in writing songs that would please audiences, instead of progressing in musical merits and promoting the aesthetics in modern music of the time. Although there were a small number of composers who wrote Ga-Gok with modern techniques in the 1960s and made efforts to break out of the Romantic melody format, they were ignored by the public and the majority of composers did not take part in it. These songs represented a few important possibilities for Ga-Gok in the future. In the 1970s, Ga-Gok's growth and activities expanded even further. Several organizations dedicated to creating and promoting Ga-Gok were founded and collections of Ga-Gok scores were published with recordings that listed hundreds of songs. A few thousand Ga-Gok were composed in the 1970s alone and several different styles of Ga-Gok thrived during this period: songs written in avant-garde technique by a small number of composers; songs with symphonic accompaniment; songs in folk-song style; songs written completely without any Korean traditional elements; songs that can be sung by amateur singers; and song cycles. This was a time of growth and experimentation for Ga-Gok, but popularism dominated the genre more than ever, and efforts to experiment with modern compositional ideas were limited.

The 1980s were a time of rapid and drastic changes in Korean politics, society, and culture. Decades of military dictatorship ended and the foundation of a true democracy was laid during this time. The economic boom coupled with the end of the Cold War offered many Koreans the opportunity to travel freely to foreign countries. Korean musicians finally had the opportunity to experience music by North Korean and eastern European composers. The financial support from the government and large corporations enabled the formation of a number of orchestras, professional choruses, and opera companies. This growth accelerated even further when the decentralization of the government began in Korea during the early 1990s. Local governments built performing arts centers and established municipal, civic, or state level professional choirs and orchestras, which led to an unprecedented growth in the quantity and quality of classical music in Korea. In the new millennium, a number of children's choirs and youth orchestras were also established throughout the country.

Within the vocal music scene, the popularity of choral music, opera, and musical theatre gradually grew over the years, but Ga-Gok concerts declined drastically during this time. Ga-Gok showed two ironic dimensions in the 1990s and in the new millennium. During the past two decades, thousands of songs were composed that contributed to the remarkable progress in the musical maturity of Ga-Gok. Most of them, however, failed to reach the audiences, and virtually all songs written during this time were not performed in concerts after their premieres. There are several reasons for this situation: composers were composing songs only for their aesthetic value; audiences were not willing to accept songs unfamiliar to them; efforts to promote new music were lacking; music classes in schools disappeared; the interests of the younger generation shifted towards commercial

music, opera, choral music, and musical theatre; and there was a strong unwillingness by singers to perform modern songs.

Despite the drastic decline in popularity of Ga-Gok, many kinds of Ga-Gok styles flourished, including avant-garde and experimental style songs. One of the most current and significant styles was composing songs written on the ideal of Interculturalism, where Korean identity and elements are intertwined with that of Western music, and the combination of these elements is directed by the poem. If the song is set to a Korean poem, the composer will bring out the core of the Korean idea contained in the poem, and if the song is set to a non-Korean poem, it will express the interpretation of the poem in the eyes of the Korean composer. Ga-Gok composed on the ideal of interculturalism now makes a unique contribution, and also introduces the merits of other cultures to Koreans. Instead of trying to define to which culture a composition belongs, the composer combines the musical languages of more than one culture where the elements from different societies coexist independently, yet harmoniously. Korean composers spent nearly a hundred years learning and mimicking Western music as best they could. Also, they struggled to define what Western music means to Koreans and what Korean-Western music should be. Their efforts finally reached fruition when they created music in which the Korean identity lives in accordance with Western identity. And now, this intercultural Korean-Western music contributes to the growth of music of the world with its own unique voice and new possibilities.

Korean Women Composers

The musical background for the majority of first generation Korean women composers was quite similar to that of their male counterparts. Early exposure to Western

music was provided to them at churches and schools established by American missionaries. Most of them studied instruments before they began to compose and virtually all of them attended top universities in Korea as music majors. Later they moved on to further their study abroad and then came back to Korea to teach. In general, their teaching was not particularly different than that of the Korean male composition teachers. While Western music was the solid foundation of their music, at some point in their artistic career many of them showed a strong desire to explore a Korean identity in their music by incorporating elements of Korean traditional music in some way. It was an idea that was virtually universal to a number of serious Korean composers and they passed the torch to their students.

Soon-Ae Kim (1920-2007) is unequivocally acknowledged as the first Korean woman composer. She received her first musical education from the American missionaries, where she learned piano and English.[12] She continued her studies in 1937 at the Ewha School for Women (later to become Ewha Womans University), the first and only school to offer a college level music degree during the Japanese occupation of Korea.[13] Kim began as a piano student first, then after switching her major to composition when the composition major was created in 1936, she became the first person to receive a university level composition degree in Korea in 1941.[14] After teaching and composing for a few years in Korea, she went to the United States in 1953 to study at

[12] Hyun Kyung Chae, *"Korean Woman Composer Soon-Ae Kim and History of Korean modern music"*(paper presented at International Council for Traditional Music's East Asia Study Conference, Shanghai, China, 2007).

[13] The first college level music degree for Korean male students began in 1945 when Korea was liberated.

[14] Chang, *The History of Korean Music.* 115.

the Eastman School of Music. There she received the Master of Arts in Music Theory with a thesis entitled *Traditional Musical Instruments and Folk Songs of Korea*.[15]

During her long career she composed several genres of classical music including opera, symphony, chamber music, and instrumental solo pieces. Her crown jewel, however, was Ga-Gok and she composed over 150 of them. Her music and stature as a composer was well-respected by the audience, critics, and her colleagues despite living in a male dominated society where the opportunities for women were scarce and leadership positions were extremely limited. Although she explored the possibilities of fusing elements of Korean traditional music, her music was mainly lyrical and diatonic, deeply rooted in the style of the Romantic Western musical heritage. Her true contribution to other Korean women composers was as a role model and inspiration to them. She was married to Hyung-Ro Kim, who was one of the first generation of Korean opera singers, but after he was abducted to North Korea during the Korean War, she had to raise her three children by herself while pursuing her study and career.[16] She even went abroad to study at one of the most prestigious music schools in the world and came back to Korea to become a composition professor at her alma mater. She achieved a remarkable career despite the extreme circumstances she was in, and against all odds in a society where women were treated as second-rate citizens, especially in educational and career opportunities.

The rebuilding of the country after the devastating war began to produce more women composers who followed in the footsteps of Soon-Ae Kim. Most of them were trained in Korea, first as instrumental majors, then switching to composition. After

[15] Chae, *"Korean Woman Composer Soon-Ae Kim and History of Korean modern music."*

[16] Kim never saw her husband again as he is believed to have died in North Korea.

finishing their education in Korea, they went abroad to further their studies. These composers fully immersed themselves in the twentieth century Western musical styles, but they all at one point or another found themselves exploring Korean traditional music and fusing it into their composition. Six composers stood out as the leaders of this generation: Young-Ja Lee (b. 1931), Sung-Hee Hong (b.1939), Kyung-Sun Seo (b. 1942), Sook-Ja Oh (b. 1941), Bang-Ja Hurh (b. 1943), and Chan-Hae Lee (b. 1945). They each developed their own individual musical languages based on the personal ethos and education they received, but all of them also explored different ways to add Korean identity to their music. They also all returned to Korea after studying abroad and taught at major universities as composition teachers.

These Korean women composers were serving as teachers and role models to the younger generation of Korean women composers; they also wanted to provide the platform for their protégés and their compositions to be recognized. This is why these six woman composers founded the Korean Society of Women Composers (KSWC) in 1981. Through their efforts, Korean women composers found a platform to premier their works and be acknowledged without competing for opportunities with their male counterparts. Women musicians, especially women composers, also had little or no recognition in Western countries. Korean women composers shared the same fate as their counterparts in other countries. However, Korean women composers overcame this obstacle and as the KSWC grew, its goal expanded to go beyond the geographical boundaries of Korea and be a part of world music with its own Korean voice:

> With a large number of 200 members, the KSWC assists in the work of members in studying and developing Korean music. By re-interpreting Korean traditional music with modern feelings and expressing modern sentiment with Korean musical instruments, the KSWC promotes communication between the past and the present by means of music. Moreover, the KSWC is actively playing its role in promoting and enhancing Korea's creative music worldwide and conversely introducing the world's creative music to Korea.[17]

Being a woman of any profession in Korea has always been difficult, since Korea has been a male-dominated society for thousands of years where a woman was expected to serve the role of wife, child giver, and mother. During the Cho-Sun dynasty (1392 – 1910) women were not allowed to have any opportunity for education outside of her house and a career was out of the question until the modernization began at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gradually the opportunity for Korean women to receive an education and pursue a career opened up, but it was a very slow process. Even to this date, the equality between men and women in the job market is far from ideal, although the educational opportunity has achieved equality. The inequality in careers is especially severe when it comes to the opportunities for leadership positions. As John O. Robison has explained,

> In South Korea, approximately seventy percent of the composers are women, while about ninety percent of the composition professorships are occupied by men. In comparison with their male counterparts, women composers have a more difficult time getting high-quality performances of their works, obtaining commissions for new compositions, and finding suitable employment that will enable them to reach their full potential.[18]

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[17] *The Korean Society of Women Composers* http://womancomposer.or.kr/kswc/eng/about.php (accessed 1 March 2011).

[18] John O. Robison, *Korean Women Composers and their Music* (Missoula, Montana: College Music Society, book forthcoming in 2012), introduction.

Thanks to the teaching, inspiration, and mentorship of the pioneers mentioned above, Korean women composers of today are making a significant contribution to the world of music with their unique musical languages. Instead of attempting to fuse Korean traditional elements in their music, these composers compose music that is individual and personal. One may find the Korean musical ideas in the composition, but it is a result of their personal story or a manifestation of their experience as a Korean, rather than the composer trying to add these ideas for the purpose of expressing her Korean identity.

Many Korean composers wanted to write the best Western music they could compose while others tried to write the most "Korean" music. Today's Korean women composers write their own personal music without any agenda. They are leading the classical music of Korea by composing music for the sake of music and to tell their stories.

CHAPTER III: THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF YOUNG-JA LEE

> Music should be based on beauty. Overcoming time or place, no matter what theme or technique one uses, all music should be based on the aesthetic of beauty.[1]

> At that moment, I felt hunger, fear, and misery, all becoming the musical creativity in the depth of my heart. I gained the impetuous power to deliver the light that will ease the pain of many people with my music that comes from my pain.[2]

Young-Ja Lee (이영자—李英子), also known as Yung-Ja Lee, was born on June 4, 1931, in Won-Joo, Kang-Won Province, Korea. She spent the first fourteen years of her life under the Japanese Imperial occupation. Her initial eight years of school were taught by Japanese teachers where only the Japanese language was allowed under the guidelines to eradicate Korean identity of language and culture. It was one of the most difficult times in Korean history because it was the first time Korea was occupied by a foreign power since the fourth century. The Japanese rule of Korea was brutal, but the intensity was most severe during the Second Sino-Japanese War (July 1937 – September 1945) and the Pacific War (December 1941 – August 1945).

For Lee, meeting a Japanese teacher who recognized her musical talent during her third grade was a life-changing event. He began to offer her free lessons in voice, piano, and music theory, and they continued for the next five years until he had to return to his country when Japan surrendered to the United States and Korea became independent. Before his departure, he left her several things: the opportunity to study Western music in

[1] Young-Ja Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee" (paper presented at The 4th Korea Composition Festival: Invited Composers' Seminar, Seoul, November 12, 2005).

[2] Ibid.

a remote part of the country, which would not have been possible if it were not for him; the discipline and passion to study music further; and all his music books. She wrote, "That was the miraculous meeting between me and music, which must have been fate."[3] Despite living in a remote area without any access to teachers and the opposition from her parents, she worked very hard on her piano by herself, as her Japanese teacher had taught her and asked her to do. Her hard work and natural talent enabled her to be accepted into Ewha Womans University as a piano major in May 1950. In her initial experiences at Ewha, she quickly recognized that her rural background left her deficient in piano skills in comparison to the students who had come from Seoul, but this only resulted in her determination to practice even harder.[4]

Unfortunately, her college life of forty-five days ended when the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950. The war lasted for three years, and millions of lives were lost and the country has been ruined. During this time, Lee had two life-changing experiences. For the first three months of the war, she was alone and lost in the middle of the war zone. While she was starving and fearing for her life, she came to the decision to become a composer who would express the harshness and affliction of life if she survived.[5] When she came back to Ewha in 1953, she changed her major to composition as she had promised herself. Another experience she had was meeting Un-Yung La (1922-1993), her composition teacher during the war. La was one of the most important composers and teachers of Western music in Korea. He was the first Korean composer to write a piece

[3] Ibid.

[4] John O. Robison, *Korean Women Composers and their Music* (Missoula, Montana: College Music Society, book forthcoming in 2012), section on Lee Young-Ja.

[5] Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

using the twelve-tone technique and founded the Korean Society of Modern Music in 1952, which joined the International Society of Contemporary Music. He was one of the pioneers of modern Western music in Korea and eventually devoted his artistic career to fusing the elements of Korean traditional music into his works. He became her teacher and a mentor for many years. In the end, her painful experiences during the war yielded the drastic turning point in her life that would set the tone for her artistic life.

Until 1958, Lee's music was the culmination of La's teaching and her own hard work. She spent countless hours in music tea rooms that played classical music at the request of the customers.[6] At a time where live music performances, music recordings, and record players were scarce, this was virtually the only way a music student could listen to music and study it beyond analyzing the scores; it was also the method her teacher, La, had used to study classical music when he was a student in Japan.[7] After eight years of intense study with La and her graduation from Ewha with a bachelor's and a master's degree in composition, Lee continued her study at the Paris Conservatoire from 1958 to 1961. Her initial plan was to study in Germany, but her teacher, La, strongly recommended that she study in Paris.[8] Thus far, Lee's study came from her own research of listening to records and from La, who was educated in Korea and Japan. This laid the groundwork for her music.

Her studies in Paris established the first layer of foundation on the musical lineage of twentieth-century French composers. Her studies in Paris included composition with

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Un-Yung La, *Un-Yung La's Life*, chapter 4. http://www.launyung.co.kr/life/life_04.pdf (accessed 20 March 2011).

[8] In 1953, La sent his music to Olivier Messiaen and he personally invited La to study at the Paris Conservatoire, but, for a political reason, he was not allowed to travel abroad. *Life and Art of Un-Yung La* http://www.launyung.co.kr/life/life_06.pdf (accessed 20 March 2011).

Tony Aubin (1907-1981); counterpoint and fugue with Noël Gallon (1891-1966) at the Conservatoire; counterpoint, fugue, and orchestration with Daniel Lesure (1908-2002) at the Schola Cantorum de Paris; and attending special lectures by Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) at the Sorbonne University. During her study in Paris, Lee met a Korean diplomat at the Korean embassy and got married in the autumn of 1960.[9] She returned to Korea and taught at Ewha from 1961 to 1983. Her teaching was interrupted on several occasions because she joined her husband on his diplomatic assignments abroad, which usually lasted from two to four years each time. It would have been a challenging and distracting issue for a teacher and composer to have the instability in life of adjusting to new countries and languages so often. But, as she had done before, once again she turned the obstacles into opportunities to improve herself as a human being and as a composer. During these trips, she attended the Manhattan School of Music in New York City where she studied with Ludmila Ulela; the Brussels Royal Conservatory, where she studied composition, fugue, and orchestration with Marcel Quinet; and the University of Paris-Sorbonne where she received the doctorate in musicology with her dissertation on the music of Messiaen.[10] Her pursuit of musical growth did not stop with these schools. The diplomatic assignments of her husband took her to other countries where she was exposed to non-Western music and she learned the traditional music of the countries where she lived, which enhanced her compositional palette. In 1976, she moved to the

[9] John O. Robison, *Korean Women Composers and their Music* (Missoula, Montana: College Music Society, book forthcoming in 2012), section on Lee Young-Ja.

[10] Young-Ja Lee, *Major Accomplishments and Creative Activities*, (2010), document provided by Lee to Kyoung Cho, 2-4.

Ivory Coast, where she found inspiration from West African music, and from 1981-1984, she had exposure to gamelan music.[11]

The most significant changes in her music came from the teaching and encouragement of the Dutch composer Ton de Leeuw (1926-1996). De Leeuw was a renowned composer who had studied under Olivier Messiaen and committed himself to composing Indian and gamelan music.[12] Lee was challenged by de Leeuw to explore the musical elements of Korean traditional music, and her later works show the resonance of her newest research, which happened to be that of her own country.

Lee's works can be divided into three groups: The early (1950s-1960s) period was centered on piano solo works, chamber music, early songs. The middle period (1970-1980) was the heyday of Lee's compositional activities while she lived in Belgium, Indonesia, France, Korea, and The Netherlands. During this time her unique compositional style and language were established. Efforts to fuse African and South Asian influences to the French style music as well as unique Korean asymmetrical rhythmic elements were made and various genres of work except vocal music were produced. The late (after 1990) period was devoted mainly on chamber and vocal music, especially Ga-Gok.

Lee's music is strongly influenced by late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century French music, particularly that of Debussy, Messiaen, and de Leeuw.[13] During her study with La in Korea, she was urged by her teacher to break away from tonal music.

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11 John O. Robison, *Korean Women Composers and their Music* (Missoula, Montana: College Music Society, book forthcoming in 2012), section on Lee Young-Ja.

[12] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording by phone, Seoul, Korea, 29 June, 2011.

[13] Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

Until 1958, her efforts to achieve this goal led her to use augmented chords, diminished chords, and dissonance through extra notes, and few twelve-tone works. These ideas were further developed by her study in Paris and continue to be an important part of her musical language today.[14]

Her studies in France had a heavy emphasis on counterpoint and fugue, which became the structural foundation of her music. Her contrapuntal technique is the "artistic soul" and "essential cornerstone" of her music.[15] She enhances her music with the frequent application of what Messiaen calls "*Les personnages rythmiques"*: small rhythmic cells that expand, contract, or remain constant in a piece. [16] She also frequently removes the time signature and allows the melodic line to create the phrases. This shows the influence of Korean traditional music, where there is no harmony and the melody carries the music with percussion insertions and interactions. Her melody is long, flexible, lyrical, and mystical. Her application of the whole-tone scale, the pentatonic scale, and bitonality is the result of her background in Korean, Indian, Indonesian, and French impressionistic music, which create her own color and her own unique intercultural music. Creating unique color and beauty from dissonance, irregularity, and asymmetry is the core of Lee's musical aesthetic.[17]

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Nani Han, "The meeting of Korean Emotion and Western Sound: Research on Color in Young-Ja Lee's Music" (paper presented at the 17th Young Musician's Conference, Daegu, Gyeongsangbuk-Do, June 27, 2007).

[16] The concept of *personnages rythmiques* is derived from Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring. Each personnage is a short rhythmic cell that has certain constituent elements, which include mobility and immobility, and for which their juxtaposition is the basic idea. Messiaen gave the technique the name personnages rythmiques and it must be considered a vital part of Messiaen's musical language. http://trainsonor.com/messiaen.html (accessed March 30, 2011).

[17] Han, "The meeting of Korean Emotion and Western Sound: Research on Color in Young-Ja Lee's Music."

Lee is an accomplished pianist, and that instrument is the center of her music.[18] She also wrote a number of pieces for harp, as did many French composers. Just like the piano, the harp has a large range and a harpist can use all ten fingers to create rich textures supplemented by the pedal and the harmonic techniques. She composed *Autoportrait* for piano and harp in an effort to create a unique and rich tapestry of combined colors. Later in her career, she showed a strong interest in Korean traditional music and its instruments. She learned *Ga-Ya-Geum* and *Ghuh-Moon-Go*, both stringed instruments that are plucked by either the fingers or a wooden pick.[19] This led her to write several pieces of music for these Korean traditional instruments, and also for both Western and Korean instruments, such as her Concerto for piano and Korean traditional orchestra.

The crown jewel of Lee's output is Ga-Gok. Lee's love for Ga-Gok dates back to when she was in high school. In the high school music textbook, she found two songs that would leave a life-long impression:

> One day in 1947, I found the works that would change my life from the new high school music textbook. They were in the first music text book written in Korean after the Korean liberation from the Japanese occupation, two songs: *Ah! Is it Autumn* and *Spinning Wheel*.[20]

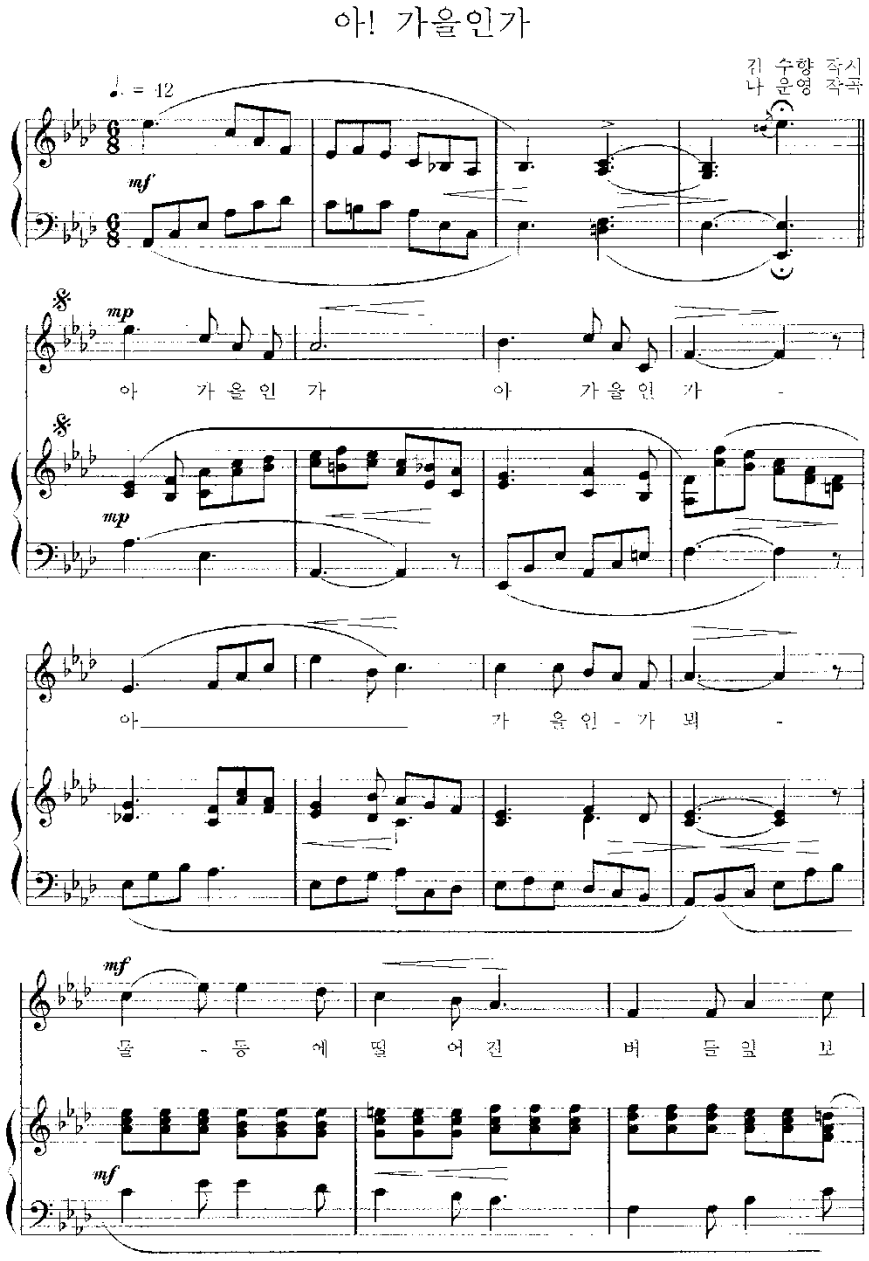
Ah! Is it Autumn was composed by Un-Yung La, who later became Lee's composition teacher. It is a song composed when La was only 14 years old, but the usage

[18] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording in person, San Francisco, CA, 5 February, 2011.

[19] Han, "The meeting of Korean Emotion and Western Sound: Research on Color in Young-Ja Lee's Music."

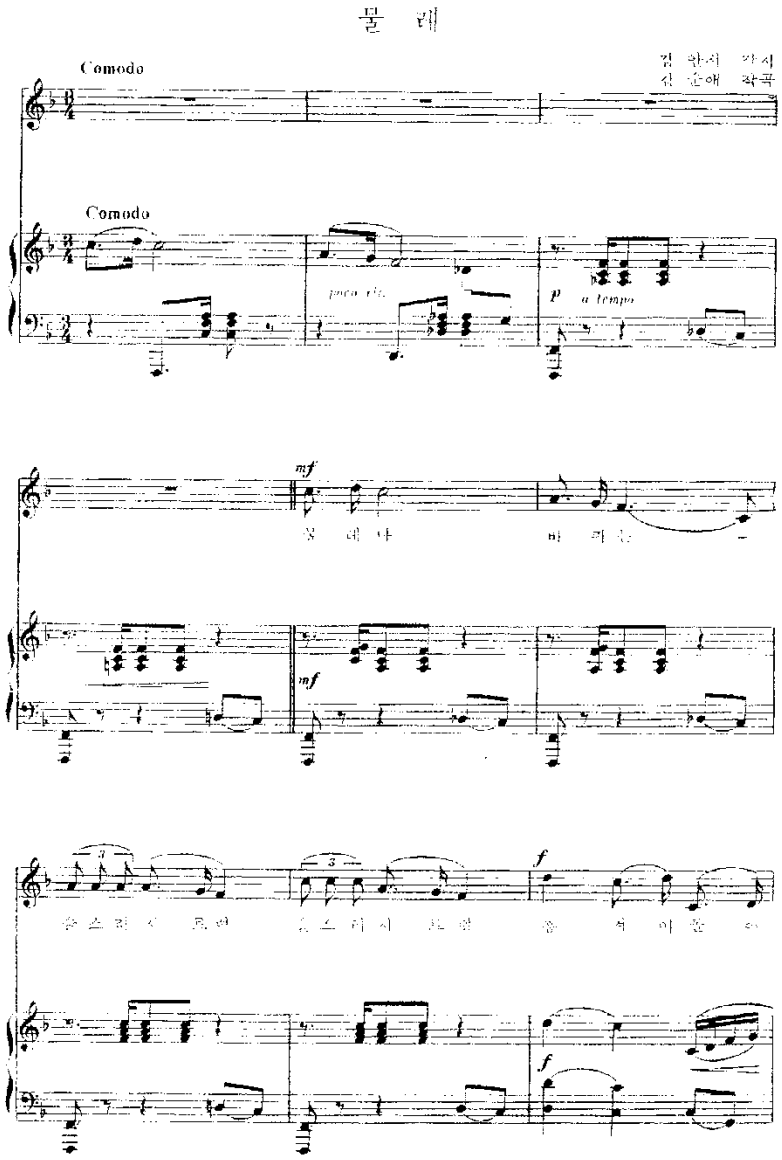
[20] Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

of a quasi-pentatonic scale and a Korean traditional rhythmic idea foretells of his strong interest in writing music using the elements of Korean traditional music.



Example 1. *Ah! Is it Autumn* by Un-Yung La

The other song, *Spinning Wheel*, is a song by Soon-Ae Kim that describes the sorrow of a woman by comparing the spin of the spinning wheel to the cycle of life.[21]



Example 2. *Spinning Wheel* by Soon-Ae Kim

[21] *Korean Knowledge Portal: Culture: Art: Music: Soon-Ae Kim.* https://knowledge.kr/SearchSF1/search_view.jsp?mdno=33579387&nowurl=%2Fjsp%2Ftheme%2FthemeList.jsp%3Fa%3D1%26dir%3Dat%26page%3D2%26searchOption%3Dall%26searchValue%3D (accessed April 1 2011).

Throughout her career, Lee's vocal music always shows the commitment to the two ideas represented by the two songs mentioned above: unconventional musical languages and the emotions of Korean women. Her songs continued to mature on these foundations until 1968, when La forbade her from writing songs. As she explains:

> I was waiting to taste enough of life's experiences—happiness, sadness, anger, pleasure, etc.—in order to compose music that can pour out the story of life from the depth of my heart and gut. Although my first compositions were lyric songs, my teacher, Mr. La, banned me from composing songs. So after I composed songs in 1968, I stopped composing songs for voice. He wanted me to challenge myself to compose instrumental music, develop my skills in larger works, and avoid following the popular practice of the day among Korean composers.[22]

Also, he believed that the voice is produced by the human body, thus the composer has to learn about the human being first to avoid annoying human hearts with mechanical and modern compositional techniques.[23] In 1991, Lee's first songs since 1968, *Three Love Songs on Poems by Nam-Jo Kim* for soprano and harp were premiered at the new composition concert celebrating the ten-year anniversary of the establishment of the Korean Society of Women Composers (KSWC). Lee dedicated the work to her first composition teacher, Un-Yung La. It was perfectly fitting to dedicate these songs to La, who celebrated his seventieth birthday in 1991. He was the teacher who told her two decades ago not to compose songs until later in her life. At age sixty—after one full cycle of human life in Asian culture—she felt that she was ready to compose songs again.

Her starting point was the poems by her favorite poet, Nam-Jo Kim (b. 1927), a renowned Korean woman poet. She had been Lee's favorite since she was a young lady

[22] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording by phone, Seoul, Korea, 12 November, 2010.

[23] Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

in the 1950s. Nam-Jo is a male sounding name in Korean and Lee fell in love with Kim's poems so much that she believed she would fall in love with the poet if she were to meet him.[24] Lee's first acquaintance with Kim's poems was dramatic. One day after the Korean War ended, Lee came across a book of poems, *Life*,[25] by Nam-Jo Kim. Immediately, Lee found an intimate and profound connection to the poems of Kim, which she would cherish throughout her life. She said,

> When I read the poem *Life*, I thought my body became paralyzed and felt the tingle that made me shudder. I thought this was a poem that I might have written in my previous life. I have kept this poem with me until today. [26]

After twenty-one years of waiting to compose songs again coupled with thirty-eight years of savoring Kim's poems, Lee's passion for Ga-Gok flourished. Her vocal music includes song cycles, a choral arrangement of solo songs, songs for voice and string orchestra, songs for voice and symphony, voice with harp, and voice with piano. Since 1991, she has composed over sixty songs. While more than half of them are set on Kim's poems, she also composed a number of songs on the poems of Korean women poets. In fact, approximately seventy percent of her songs were composed on poems by women poets. However, she chose the poems for her songs not because they were written

[24] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording by phone, Seoul, Korea, 19 November, 2010.

[25] *Life* here means a manner of existence as in "taking someone's life is murder"

[26] Review in On-Line Publisher and Music Review Portal, SMDPNP, *"Young-Ja Lee: Thirteen Songs on the Poems of Nam-Jo Kim"* http://www.smdpnp.com/photo_board/bbs_view.asp?idx=41&key=&keyfield= (accessed 1 March 2011).

by women poets, but rather because of the merit of each poem.[27] Lee elaborated on the distinctiveness of her songs as follows:

> My songs have several characters. I do not turn the poem into the vocal melody of the song; rather, I first try to express the poem's deep meaning in the piano part. I explore the inner workings of the poem and compose the music next. Then the melody is created to suit the voice, which is the part of the human body.[28]

It is interesting to note that she places the piano as the center of the music that expresses the poem, not the vocal melody. It is what French Impressionistic composers often applied in their songs. For example, Debussy's song, *Clair de lune*, written on the poem of French Symbolism poet Paul Verlaine, is virtually a piano sonata with vocal obbligato, where the piano part paints the picture of the scene that the poem symbolizes and the voice adds additional layers of color. Lee explains it further,

> Therefore, my songs do not have piano accompaniment; rather, they are lyric poems for piano. So I believe it is fine to perform them as piano solos without voice. That means my songs could possibly be called "Sonata for Voice and Piano," "Ballade," or "Tone Poem."[29]

Lee's songs are not lengthy, but they are filled with all the signature characteristics of her music and also her sensitivity and commitment to the poems. They are colorful in harmony, complex in rhythm, poetic, emotional and illustrate multiple musical cultures.

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[27] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording in person, San Francisco, CA, 5 February, 2011.

[28] Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

[29] Ibid.

> Often I have miraculous dreams. I wake up from these dreams and revive the sounds of my dream on piano: I clearly see scores of new music in a state that feels like half dream and half reality or sometimes the color of the harmony is clearly heard in my dreams. It is an unbelievable blessing. For example, in early 2004, when I was struggling with poetic idea of "spring" by Nam-Jo Kim, that mysterious sound came to me. The color and flow of spring and the flow of love came to me.[30]

The most important achievement of Lee's songs is that they are the culmination of her long artistic journey, which also represents and exemplifies the journey of Korean women composers of the last several decades. These songs not only illustrate the struggles and efforts of Korean women composers, but they also foretell the future of their music: music with Korean identity.

[30] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV: THE LIFE AND POEMS OF NAM-JO KIM

One of the most celebrated modern Korean poets, Nam-Jo Kim (b. 1927) has several names that have been dubbed to her: Sappho of Korea, one of the three top love poets, and Korea's only living Poet Laureate, to name a few.[1] She succeeded Cheon-Myeong Noh (1912-1957) and Yun-Sook Mo (1910-1990), who were members of the first generation of modern Korean woman poets, and she represented the voice of Korean women for several decades with her elegant and sensitive poems that touched the hearts of Koreans. Unlike Noh and Mo, whose hardship in life due to the political turmoil damaged their artistic and personal lives,[2] Kim stayed away from political involvement and concentrated on teaching and writing poems that dealt with personal themes. Because of this, it is fair to say that Kim was the first Korean woman poet who was revered by the general public and whose stature equaled that of major Korean male poets.

Kim was born in Dae-Gu, in the southeastern part of Korea, to a well-to-do Protestant family. When she was thirteen years old, her family moved to Japan where she attended high school and graduated in 1944. She came back to Korea when the Japanese occupation ended in 1945 and attended Seoul National University, where she received degrees in Korean literature and education in Korean language. She began her teaching career as a high school Korean language teacher. After teaching at a few universities as an adjunct, she became a full time faculty member at Sook-Myung Women's University in Seoul, where she taught until her retirement in 1993.

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[1] So-Yup Lee, "Korean Sapho, Nam-Jo Kim," *Asia Literature Fall Edition* (2006). http://www.dsb.kr/detail.php?number=2174&thread=23r03 (accessed 1 March 2011).

[2] Cheon-Myeong Noh was sent to prison for her forced-collaboration to the communist North Korean during the Korean War and Yun-Sook Mo collaborated with the Imperial Japanese during its occupation of Korea, which tarnished her reputation.

She discovered the world of poetry when she was a high school student in Japan.[3]

> I was under recommended sick leave of absence when I read Rabindranath Tagore's (1861–1941) poems.[4] I was in utter shock to discover such world while I was suffering from Tuberculosis. Reading his poems really moved and thrilled me. These poems written by another Asian offered me the kind of emotion that feels like the beauty of the shades in the forest and restfulness of a deep valley.[5]

Her debut as a professional poet occurred in 1950. After the painful experience of the Korean War (1950-1953), Kim published her first collection of poems entitled *Life* in 1953.[6] It was a culmination of her work thus far, but also the result of her experience during the national tragedy that bled into her personal one. Death was always close to her throughout her childhood. Her father passed away when she was very young, and her two brothers also died before the Korean War. Then during the war, her last sibling died and his grave was never found because of the confusion and chaos in the midst of the war. At the age of twenty three, she became an only child with her mother as the only family left. *Life* is not only the title of her first published book of poems, but also one of the poems in it.[7]

Life[8]

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[3] I believe she was reading them in Japanese translations of Tagor's English poems.

[4] Rabindranath Tagore was an Indian Nobel literature Prize Laureate poet.

[5] Nam-Jo Kim's interview with The Cultural Journal quoted in on line news journal, Media Paran http://media.paran.com/news/view.kth?dirnews=2841815&year=2009 ((accessed 1 March 2011).

[6] It is a common practice in Korea for poets to publish their works in the form of book of poem collections.

[7] It is also a common practice in Korea that the title of the book of poems is after one of the poems in it.

[8] A more literal translation of the word "목숨" in this context is "life" as in "Last breath of life" or "life and death"

Can we still call a life a life?
For someone whose eyes have been plucked out,
Even for the pets or cherished potteries.

All men are like withered leaf,
All men want to live,
In fiery Seoul, I offered the least selfish prayer I have ever leaned in my life
While holding onto the dying earth that is like a lotus flower about to end it blossom.

Even if the final death in vain after waiting and yearning like
A cicada for five thousand years[9] is the predestined punishment from the sky to our clan,

I still wanted hold onto my life even if I exist
As a stone in any mountain that at least would not die.

Figure 1. *Life* by Nam-Jo Kim

In this heartbreaking poem, Kim uses several metaphors to describe very eloquently the graphic scene of the war, the will to survive, the fragility of life, and the hope for life despite the tragic war that feels like a fate. Her life's experience and the hardship and chaotic nature of life she endured is expressed directly in her poems. She spent her childhood when her country was under a foreign occupation and endured World War II, and it was soon followed by the war that demolished the virtually entire nation. She saw the horror of her own countrymen killing each other on a massive scale and also had to endure the death of her family members one after another. It is no wonder her first book of poems centered on "Life" and death.

[9] Korean history dates back to 3000 B. C., and Kim is metaphorically comparing it with the long nymphal instar of the cicada.

Kim's life took a drastic turn in 1955. That year, she got married to a renowned Korean sculptor, Sae-Jung Kim (1928-1986) and also became a full time faculty member at Sook-Myung Women's University. These events provided a financial, social, and emotional stability that she never had before. In Korean culture, a woman getting married offers a significant change in her life as it offers important stability and security financially, emotionally, and culturally. Even to this day, an old maid is often treated as someone who should be assisted by people around her until she is married, and not marrying is viewed as a serious flaw. There are also significant financial disadvantages and insecurity because Korea has always been a male-dominated society where women are offered less opportunities in the job market, fewer leadership positions in all forms of organizations, and less financial compensation.[10] Additionally, her teaching position at a major university further enhanced her life, because a professor in Korea has significant financial and social stature as well as the respect from the society.

Although the themes of life and death continue to appear in her poems, Kim's works begin to reflect her more stable life and emotions. Her second book is entitled *Perfume of Nard* (1955),[11] the third one is *Tree and Wind* (1958), followed by *Chi of Passion* and *Music of Windy Forest*. Her poems of this period deal with Christian themes and love, the key themes that define her poems. In the earlier part of the 1960s, her love poems illustrated longing, yearning, and a thirst for general love that includes friendship and dedication. But these themes gradually change to the passionate and fiery love of two

[10] Even in the case of inheritance, a son is usually given more percentage of the share than a daughter.

[11] In the New Testament, Jesus was anointed by a woman who poured on him a jar of expensive perfume made of pure nard oil. It symbolizes the preparation of Jesus' burial, sacrifice Jesus is about to make for mankind, and expected devotion of all Christians.

lovers. This happens in the 1970s, and the intensity of her poems increases as she minimizes the length of the poems while offering absolute devotion to the value of love. When she was once asked about the object of her love, she responded, "It is not one person because I love 'that person' too much. If you love someone so much, you can love everyone."[12] The finest example of this sentiment is *A-Ga II*, written in 1971. In this poem, she cries to her beloved who is already dead. In the context of the poem, it is hard to determine if her object of love is her mother[13] or a man she loved. Her response to this question was, "It is for one being that can be reincarnated beyond time and space."[14]

Her poems of Christian themes were mainly works of humility, confession, petition, and devotion. They appeared from the early part of her career and continued to evolve over the years. However, this theme also moves in a new direction after a change in her personal life, the death of her husband in 1986. After losing her mother, the only direct family member she had left, the death of her husband was in a way the last blow to her dealing with death. Kim, however, finds a remarkable resolution to her life-long personal tragedy and directly expresses her resolve in her artistry. In place of the pain of death, separation, and loneliness of her early works, deep faith, patience, and exertion fill her later works.[15] She was able to find the peace and harmony of her life and emotion through the power of faith and love for life in the end. Now she sees the issue of life and

[12] Nam-Jo Kim, interview by author, tape recording by phone, 7 September, 2011. She said this is a quote that someone once told her.

[13] Kim's mother passed away in 1967.

[14] Nam-Jo Kim, interview by author, tape recording by phone, 7 September, 2011.

[15] Poetry of Love – Nam-Jo Kim. October 11, 2005. Thesis by Chang-Uk Kim and Soo-Jeong Lee, 2.

death from a perspective beyond the pain and sadness. The titles of her last three books of poems reflect this eloquently: *Wind Baptism*, *For Serenity*, and *Study of Hope*.

She has struggled with the agony of life for a long time while continuing to find an answer, and that is directly expressed in her works. In the end, the hardship of the life she experienced and her efforts to overcome it not only became the reason for her artistry, but also an inspiration. And this is also why Kim's poems speak to readers from all walks of life. Her life and poems are the stories of Korean women and their difficult lives, but they are also stories that can reach anyone who encounters the issues of life such as death, pain, loss, longing, and yearning for answers. However, she does not impose an answer on her readers. What she presents is humble confessions of her story and the answers she found through love and faith. As a result, readers are offered the opportunity to meditate upon the questions and answers presented by her in concise, condensed, and elegantly chosen words, without being lectured or confined to the idea of the poet. This is the true artistry of Kim's poems.

Chapter V: SONGS ON POEMS OF NAM-JO KIM

A-Ga II (Song of Songs / Song of Love), 아가 II—雅歌 II (1991)

A-Ga (아가—雅歌), meaning *Petite Song* or *Elegant Song*, is the first song of *Three Love Songs on Poems by Nam-Jo Kim* for soprano and harp written in 1991. It was premiered at the new composition concert celebrating the ten year anniversary of the establishment of The Korean Society of Women Composers (KSWC). Dedicated to her first composition teacher Un-Yung La, this set of three songs is the first vocal composition Lee composed since 1968. When she was asked what gave her the motivation to go back to writing vocal music, she said:

> I was waiting to taste enough of life's experiences—happiness, sadness, anger, pleasure, etc.—in order to compose music that can pour out the story of life from the depth of my heart and gut. Although my first compositions were lyric songs, my teacher, Mr. La banned me from composing songs. So after I composed songs in 1968, I stopped composing songs for voice. He wanted me to challenge myself to compose instrumental music, develop my skills in larger works, and avoid following the popular practice of the day among Korean composers.[1]
>
> He believed voice is produced by the human body, and, thus, the composer has to learn about the human being first to avoid annoying human hearts with mechanical and modern compositional techniques. [2]

At age sixty—one full cycle of human life in Asian culture—she felt that she was ready to compose songs again. It was perfectly fitting for her to dedicate these songs to the seventy-year-old La, a teacher who had advised her not to compose songs more than two decades earlier.

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[1] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording by phone, Seoul, Korea, 12 November, 2010.

[2] Lee, "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

Composing lyric songs on the poems by her favorite poem, Kim has been a life-long dream of Lee, and, after composing *Three Love Songs on Poems by Nam-Jo Kim* for soprano and harp in 1991, she composed seventeen additional songs on Kim's poems.

Although its literal meaning— *Elegant Song* or *Petite Song*— still matches the nature of the poem, the best title in English would be *Song of Love* because *A-Ga* is also the Korean and Chinese title of the Old Testament's *Song of Songs* (also known as *Song of Solomon* or *Solomon's Song of Songs*), which is made up of King Solomon's love songs for a Shulamite woman.[3] Poet Nam-Jo Kim is a devout Roman Catholic[4] and renowned for her love poems. It seems only natural that she found her inspiration from the Christian literature that is filled with love: love between two lovers that is also commonly viewed by Christians as love of God towards God's children. Nam-Jo Kim has written four poems called *A-Ga* and three of them were included in her poem collection *To the Poor Name* published in 1991.

All four poems express deep devotion and love, but *A-Ga II* has a unique dark and mystical quality that separates it from the other three. The scene one can envision in the poem is that of a young woman longing for her dead husband and wishing to be reunited with him in the afterlife.

I
Will go to you.
I will go to you no matter what.

I will go even with the empty hands washed in morning dew.

[3] The ChristianAnswers® WebBible™ Encyclopedia, http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/shulamite.html (accessed 1 February 2011).

[4] From the interview with Nam-Jo Kim in Kyung-Hyang Daily News, http://newsmaker.khan.co.kr/khnm.html?mode=view&dept=116&art_id=8572&fid= (accessed 1 December 2010).

Even if I lose my sight, I will go.

The more time stacks up, the more blue water-like sorrow becomes
I will go with this sorrow.[5]
I will go to you.

I will go to find my better half of the underworld—one half of my flesh.
Each piece of the black hair has a spirit and I will go while calling every one of them.

I
Will go to you.[6]

Figure 2. *A-Ga II* by Nam-Jo Kim

It is an unusual poem because Nam-Jo Kim is famous for her love poems and poems of Christian devotion. When reading her love poems, many wonder to whom she is confessing her love, devotion, longing, and guilt. Some believe it is to God, while others believe it is the universal love of a loved one written in feminine delicacy that appeals to all readers. Although she has written a number of poems of confession that seek forgiveness, a poem of such darkness and profound sadness is very unusual for Nam-Jo Kim. When you study her personal life closely, however, you find that her life was filled with death and the pain of losing loved ones. As a young child, she grew up with her grandmother, grandfather, his brother, and his sister-in-law, but all four died within a few years of each other when she was young. Her mother's parents also died when she was young. Her father died when she was still a teenager and his older brother

[5] 한(恨) is the Korean word used. It is a word used to describe a strong negative emotion for Koreans, and it has several possible meanings such as "grudge," "hate," "bitter feeling," "regret," or "rancor," and it is often related to women's emotion. In the context of this poem, it is best to be understood as "sorrow" or "profound sadness" due to unresolved heartache.

[6] English translation by Kyoung Cho, 2010.

also died at a young age leaving a baby son—her only cousin—but he also died in his twenties. Her three siblings died before they reached adulthood with the last one, her brother, dying during the Korean War in 1950. In the end, at age twenty-three, she became the only survivor of her father's and mother's entire family lines. The biggest loss she suffered, however, was the loss of her mother in 1967. When her last brother died during the war, Kim and her mother had to bury him in a massive, makeshift public graveyard in Seoul, but they could not stay in Seoul because of the prolonged war. When they came back to Seoul after the war, his body was nowhere to be found. This tragedy became the main reason for her mother's death later. This is the story she told:

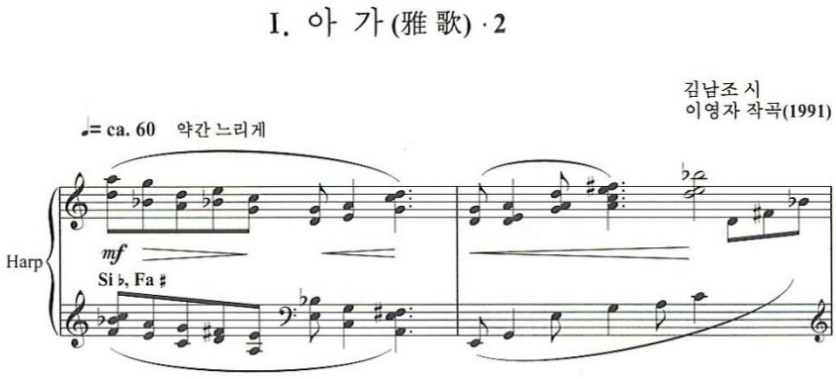
> I do not think I can tell the story of my life if I omit how so many deaths in my family took place and how it scared my heart. Under several different situations, I became the only survivor and I feel depressed about the deaths that surrounded me like a folding screen. And this has no small relationship to my life and poetry, and there is no reason to deny this. Of all deaths, the most unforgettable one is that of my mother. She was my biggest fan who cherished my writing, and she encouraged me to become a poet. During the time that the two of us formed the whole family, she had the importance of half of all human beings in the world to me. When she passed away, I felt as if I have died.[7]

Her mother's death was in 1967 and this poem was written that year. We have two possibilities to see who her beloved is in this poem. It can be a mourning widow who lost her husband, or it can also be viewed as a metaphor for Lee's despair at losing her mother. When we compare what she said about her mother "having the importance of half of all human beings in the world" and this line from the poem—"I will go to find one half of my flesh"—we can assume that the beloved one is a metaphor for her lost mother. The poem is in four parts. In the first part, we hear the unwavering determination of the

[7] Nam-Jo Kim, *My Resume: Life of Artist* (Seoul: Hae-Wha Dang Press), 48-54. English Translation by Kyoung Cho.

poet to go to her beloved. In the second part, we have a chance to understand the depth of the poet's sadness and sorrow. The word 한(恨) –pronounced "hahn"—is identified by most Koreans as an emotion that best represents Korean emotional identity and one of the foundations of its culture. It is a sad or painful emotion that stays with a person until it is fully resolved, fulfilled, or finished. If it is not done by the end of one's life, it will carry on to the afterlife. Much Korean folklore deals with a ghost or a spirit seeking revenge, or a wish to be fulfilled has 한(恨) as the reason for wandering and haunting people. The spirit cannot move onto the next world, and will use 한(恨) as the reason for its wrath, sadness, and haunting humans because they need to resolve their 한(恨) before moving on to the next life. It is not a fiery emotion that rises up violently and calms down quickly; rather, it is a calm, cold, and deep emotion that came from years of accumulation. Kim describes it eloquently using blue water as a metaphor. The third part tells us how she plans to live the rest of her life and where she believes she will meet her beloved again. If we accept that her beloved one is her mother, we can understand this line better—"Each piece of the black hair has a spirit"— as a metaphor, because traditional Korean teaching has been "our body, including skin and hair that was given by parents" (신체발부 수지부모-身體髮膚 受之父母); thus, what she tells us is that she will live the rest of her life thinking about her mother until she sees her again in the next life. This part also talks about the underworld and brings the poem to its climax. The last part ends with a repeat of the first line of the poem to give unity and a sense of closure to the poem.

Young-Ja Lee's musical setting of this poem is also in four sections that match the divisions of the poem.



Example 3. Measures 1-2 of *A-Ga II*

The song starts with no key signature or time signature. In fact, all three songs in the set are written without key signature or time signature, except for seven measures in the middle of *A-Ga II*. The tempo marking is ♩ = *ca.* 60 (약간 느리게 somewhat slowly). Instead of key signatures, Lee has indicated at the beginning of the first measure *Si-flat* and *Fa-sharp* (B-flat and F-sharp), which make intervals of an augmented fifth and a diminished fourth—two intervals Lee uses very often in her music.[8] These two notes also serve as the two key notes of the Javanese mode created by adding them to the Korean pentatonic scale (A, C, D, E, G). Javanese music is based on two scale groups: *Slendro* uses five notes and *Pelog* uses seven notes. What we hear in this song is the Korean pentatonic scale working together with the Javanese mode on A (A, Bb, C, D, E, F#, G). They are closely related modes and effectively work together as they share five common notes. This is a fine example of Lee using modal mixture to enrich the harmonic language in this song.

The prelude starts with both hands of the harp playing block chords in mainly open fifths, and some fourth intervals that are created by the addition of dissonant

[8] Nani Han, "The Korean Composer, Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

seconds. In the first measure, both hands move in a descending motion, then ascend in the second measure, and move to the first part of the third measure where the phrase ends with the right hand. This inverted arch-shaped phrase contains the short melodic theme, which is the foundation of this song, hidden among the block chords. Figure 3 shows this theme, which prevails throughout the entire song in several variations—diminution, augmentation, inversion, and retrograde.

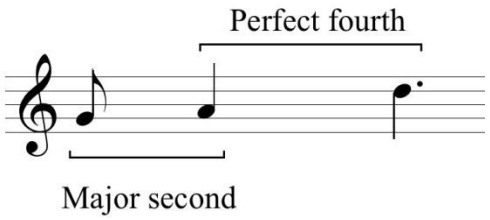
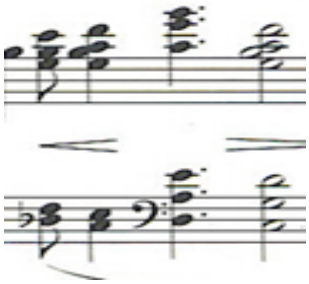


Figure 3. Melodic Theme (Musical Idea 1) of *A-Ga II*

This theme is supplemented by two other musical ideas: block chords and rapid sixteenth note notes. (Example 4)

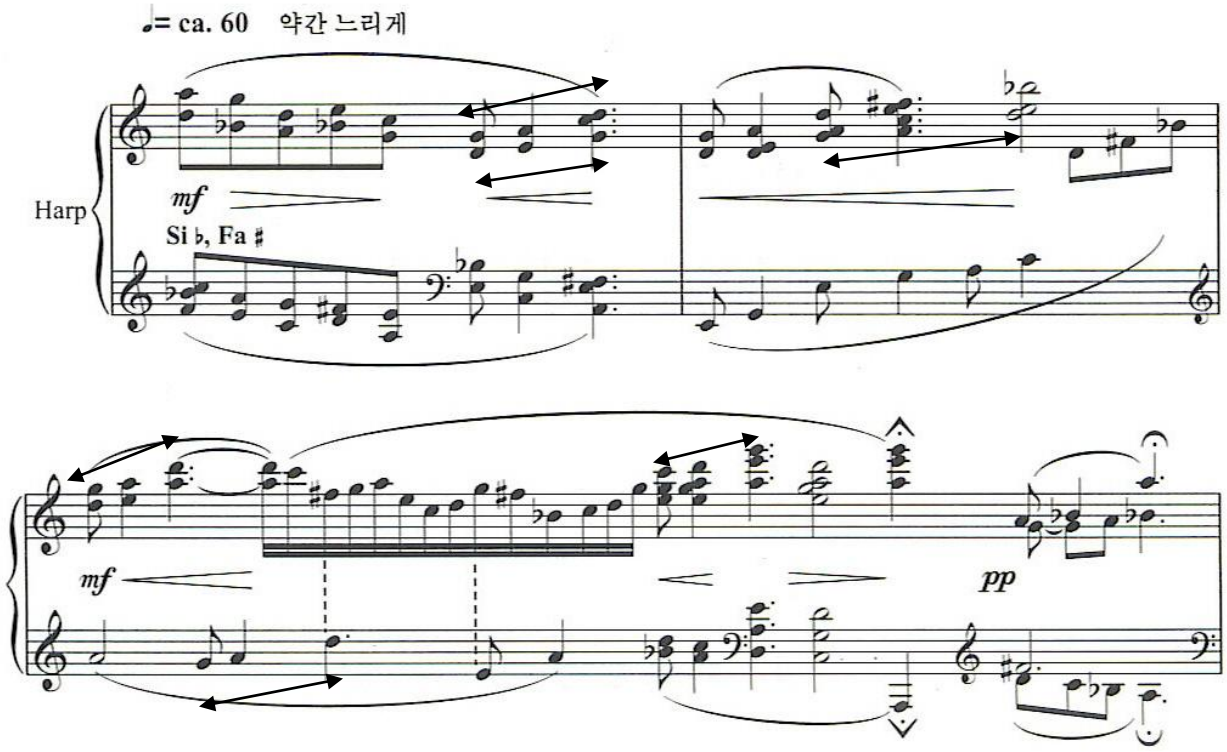
Example 4. Musical Idea 2 of *A-Ga II*

The three-measure prelude features all three major musical ideas of the song. They interact throughout the prelude as counterpoint and also are mixed together as one unit.



Example 5. Musical Idea 3 of *A-Ga II*

Then the right hand overlaps the left hand's melody with rapid notes outlining the intervals that the song is based on until the prelude ends. At this point we hear block chords of fourths and fifths in a large gap between the two hands, followed by four block chords that work like a short pianissimo coda to prepare for the entrance of the voice. Each measure of the prelude is in asymmetrical rhythm. The first and second measures contain eleven eighth notes (11/8), and the last measure becomes virtually non-measured rhythm as it has the equivalent of thirty-one eighth notes (31/8).



Example 6. Musical Idea 1 (measures 1-3) of *A-Ga II*

This short, three-measure prelude/introduction has several important features that can be heard as a microcosm of Young-Ja Lee's music. Rhythmically, we hear several characteristics that represent Lee's musical identity. First, each measure contains an odd number of eighth note beats—eleven, eleven, and thirty-one—all of which are prime numbers. This rhythmic pattern creates asymmetry and makes each measure more organic than a conventional 2/2, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, etc., and it is one of the foundations of Lee's distinctive musical language: "I love," she says, "to use irregular rhythms in my rhythmic language and undividable rhythm adds aesthetical beauty at the foundation of my music."[9]

[9] "Music World of Young-Ja Lee."

Second, slowly moving note groups contrast with rapid ones in different hands, which creates a rhythmic counterpoint. The two hands alternate between playing the same rhythmic patterns and also contrasting ones, resulting in unity as well as contrast. Finally, the rhythmic theme/motive of three notes and its variations works as the rhythmic and thematic foundation of the song: (). She uses the sequences of a melodic theme and also applies it in transposition and interval augmentation and diminution. This provides an underlying unity and stability to the piece (see Example 6).

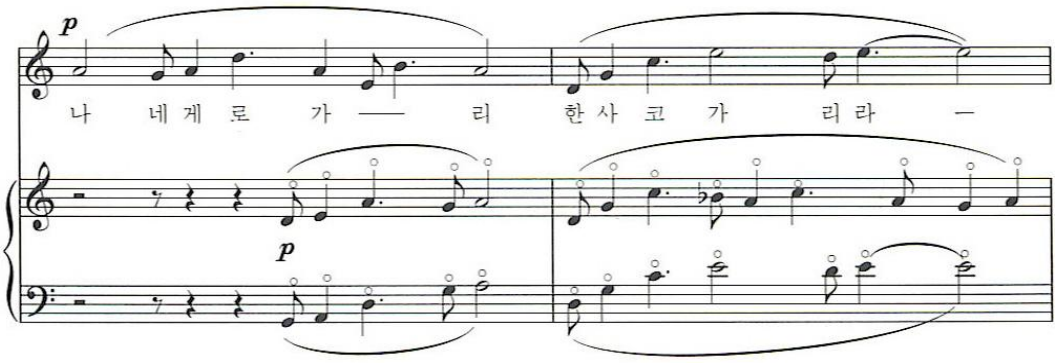
The unpredictable, asymmetrical, and irregular rhythmic ideas are an important foundation of Lee's music, and it is a result of her effort to create complexity, suspension, flexibility, and elasticity while avoiding obvious regularity and predictability. Her rhythmic foundation comes from the rhythmic nature of Korean traditional music, which is unpredictable and irregular, and it was further enhanced by the music of West Africa and Indonesia that she encountered during her times in Africa and Southeast Asia. Unlike symmetrical rhythmic structures in Western music, the frequent irregular rhythmic patterns heard in Lee's music are the result of combining the music of Africa and Southeast Asia with the Korean ethos (musical).[10] In the words of Keith Howard:

> The key to Korean music is rhythm. Almost everything has a repeating rhythmic pattern underneath it in Korean music, and these patterns keep musicians together in an ensemble as well as giving flavor and emotion, depending on their speed and rhythmic complexity. Court music, then, is serene, and tends to be fairly slow, with the slowest piece having less than 30 beats per minute. It is difficult to count that slowly, and Koreans talk about measuring beats in terms of breathing. Rhythm is probably the most important ingredient in Korean music, and virtually every genre of music is built around "Chang-Dan", rhythmic cycles. The cycle will be repeated for a whole section or movement, and consists of a strong

[10] Ibid.

> downbeat and set accents. Western music has developed melody and harmony, and Koreans find Western rhythm—metrical, repetitive three-beat and four-beat patterns—too simple. Koreans reckon that rhythm develops "Hûng", a feeling of great enthusiasm verging on ecstasy.[11]

A significant unifying element is the short melodic theme shown in Figure 3, which is based on three notes—G, A, and D (major second, perfect fourth, and perfect fifth intervals). Just like the rhythmic idea (♪ ♩ ♩.), this melodic/intervallic theme prevails throughout the song both in its basic pattern, and modified through the use of such devices as diminution, augmentation, inversion, and retrograde.

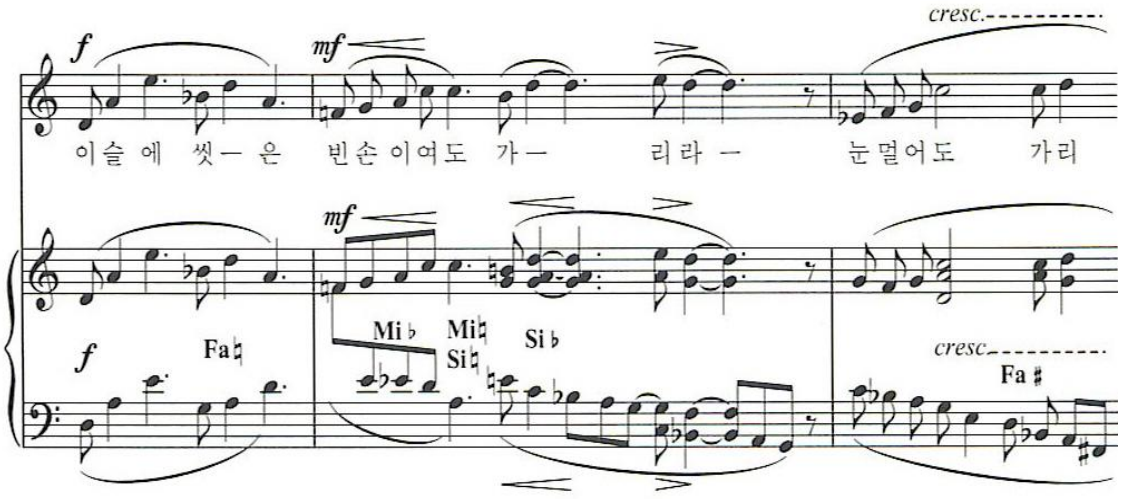


Example 7. Measures 4-5 of *A-Ga II*

In the fourth measure of the first part of the song, the voice enters unaccompanied for the first half of the measure until the harp joins in the middle of the measure. The harp plays in harmonics through the fourth and fifth measures. In the fourth measure, the voice sings virtually the same melody we heard in the previous measure in the left hand of the harp, while the harp plays a short counterpoint with a sequence of the vocal melody in

[11] Keith Howard, *"World Music Centre"* http://www.worldmusiccentre.com/uploads/cdime/howard2001.PDF (accessed 5 March 2011).

both hands, which enters in the second half of the measure. The voice and the two lines alternate between open fifth chords and unisons, thus exploring the intervals found in a major pentatonic scale. These two measures are in the style of a soft accompanied recitative, which the voice begins as a monologue and lamentation. Lee creates a very effective sound and mood that reflects the emptiness and loneliness of the narrator by using the open fifth chords and unisons mixed with unaccompanied writing and harmonic tones in the harp. The fourth measure started with three lines forming two open chords—the voice/right hand forms perfect fourths and the right hand/left hand forms additional open fifth chords. Then in the fifth measure, after the three lines play the same notes in octaves for the first three notes, the left hand plays the same notes—in octaves— while the right hand breaks away and plays a counter-melody. Here Lee uses an accented passing tone, B-flat, to form a diminished fifth instead of the perfect fourth or fifth of the previous measures. It is a borrowed tone from the minor mode, designed to reflect her strong will by adding color and emphasis on the word "go." The phrase ends with the voice and the left hand on E while the right hand ends on A, forming an open fourth and fifth chord. But in the next measure the opposite happens where the voice and the right hand are in octaves, while the left hand plays the role of the right hand in the previous measure.



Example 8. Measures 6-8 of *A-Ga II*

From the sixth measure on (Example 8), both voice and harp are forte and the voice reflects a normal singing tone in contrast to the whisper or murmur-like singing in the fourth and fifth measures. Lee effectively uses the dynamics in both voice and harp and the color of the harmonic tones in the harp to reflect the different emotions of the two phrases.

I
Will go to you.
I will go to you no matter what.
(Both voice and harp are *piano*—harp plays harmonics)

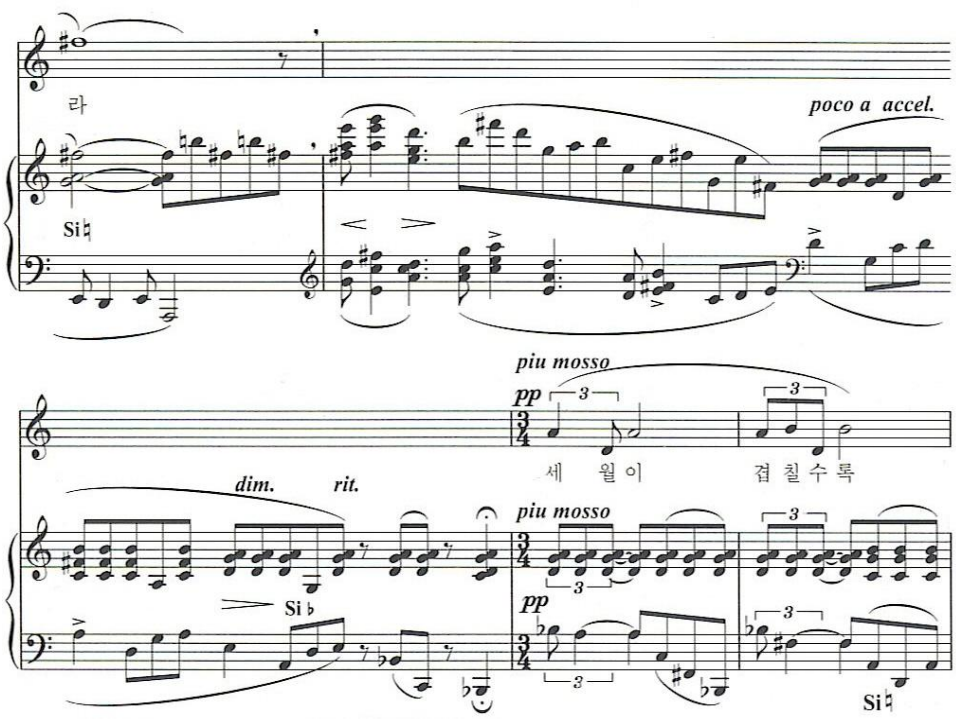
I will go even with the empty hands washed in morning dew.
Even if I lose my sight, I will go.
(Both voice and harp are *forte*—harp plays normally)

Figure 4. Comparison of two phrases

As the voice sings “I will go” repeatedly in measures 7-8, the vocal range ascends and the dynamics increase, which effectively reflects the poet’s will and desire. From measures seven to nine, the two hands move in opposite directions for the first time and we hear alternations of B-natural, B-flat, F-natural, and F-sharp. These intervals, along with the *accelerando*, add an emotional instability and excitement that describes the turmoil of the poet’s emotions. But towards the end of the measure nine, the two hands begin to get close in range as the initial key center of A with B-flat and F-sharp returns (representing the Javanese mode). This recalls the stability from the beginning of the song, and the *diminuendo* and *ritardando* bring a gradual and natural closure to the first section of the song. Just as the end of the prelude introduces the vocal theme of the next measure, here, at the end of the first section of the song, we hear a preview of the next part. Groups of repeated eighth notes are heard in the right hand while the left hand plays new melodic ideas.

In the second part of the song, which begins in measure 10 with a *più mosso*, a variant of the first theme of the song appears in a new rhythmic pattern. It is a group of three notes in several variations based on an eighth note triplet (♩♫) as its basic form. As in the first theme, the pitches are D, G, and A (major second, perfect fourth and perfect fifth). There are strong similarities between the two themes as they are both based on a unit of three notes with the same intervals, and with the same pitches (D, G, and A). This is foreshadowed in latter part of measure 9 by the left hand (A-D-E) and the right hand (D-G-A) playing the same intervals a fourth apart, sharing two common notes. B-flat and C form a major second interval, working as a precursor to the left hand notes in measure 9, playing the role of connecting elements of the phrases. This leads to the

downbeat of measure 11, which begins with a dissonant major seventh that reflects the word “stacks” (세월이 겹칠수록- The more time stacks up).

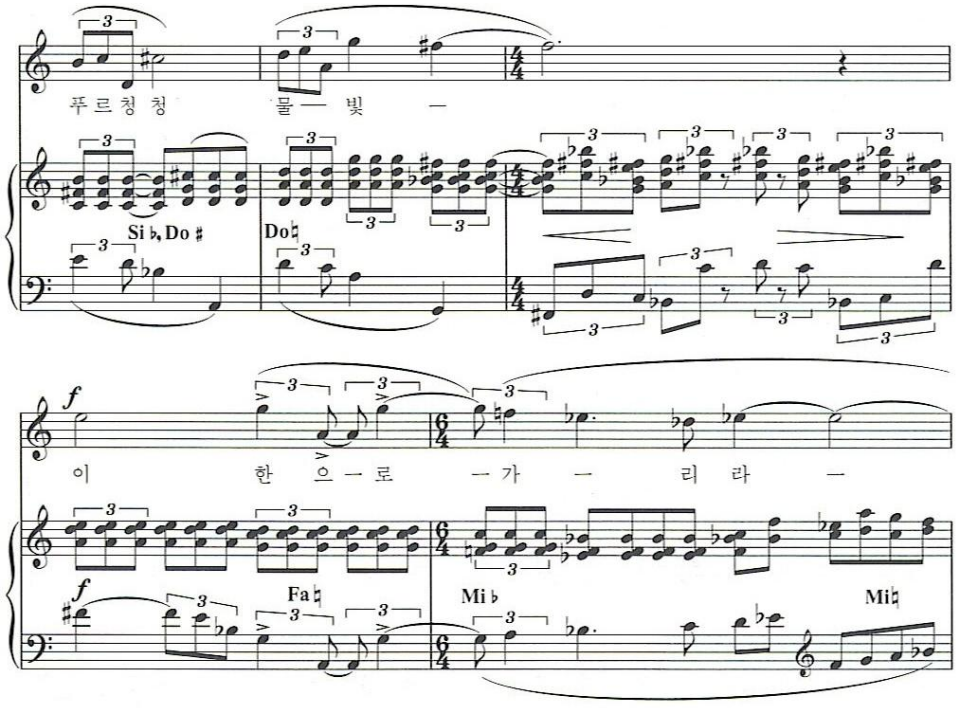


Example 9. Measures 8-11 of *A-Ga II*

However, there are also several differences between these sections. The first theme’s three notes move horizontally as a short melody, whereas the pattern in measures 10 to 11 is a vertical block chord that is repeated three times in eighth-note triplets as one unit. Measures 10 to 16 are the second part of the song and the only part where time signatures are indicated; this provides a contrast to the asymmetrical measures without time signature and reflects the change in the text (“The more time stacks up, the more blue water-like sorrow becomes.”). The prevailing flow of triplets reflects the continuation of time and the motion of water. Flowing evenly without accents, they evoke the idea of steady and continuing movement, projecting images such as time and water. One fine example is *Les Berceaux* by Gabriel Fauré, where the piano

accompaniment supports the melody in the voice with prevailing triplets that reflect the movement of ships, cradles, and water.

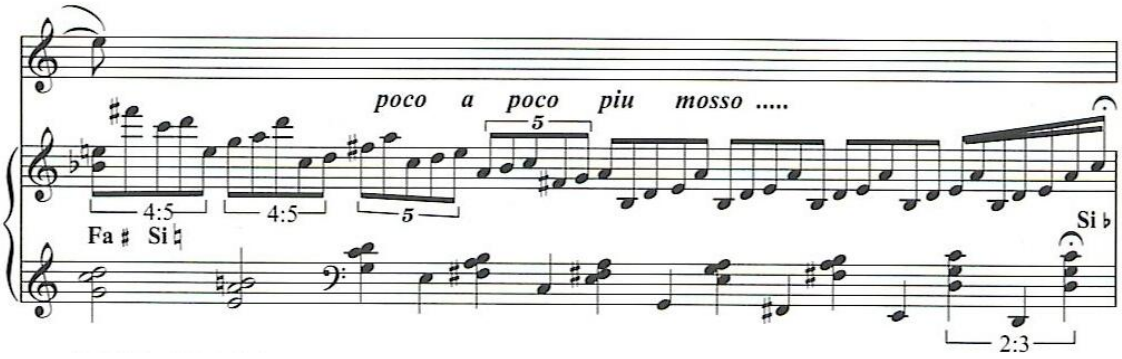
In this section of Lee's song, we hear three layers working together. Each layer plays its own theme, illustrating separate ideas while complementing each other harmonically. The voice and the left hand form counterpoint, but the left hand also extends the harmonic content while the right hand provides the harmonic filler and chordal foundation for the vocal line.



Example 10. Measures 12-16 of *A-Ga II*

The voice describes the emotions of the poet, the right hand signifies the water, and the left hand reflects the turbulence of time and life. As the emotion in the text intensifies, the vocal range moves up and the rhythm in the left hand becomes irregular and agitated (Example 9). Although dramatically separate, musically they are

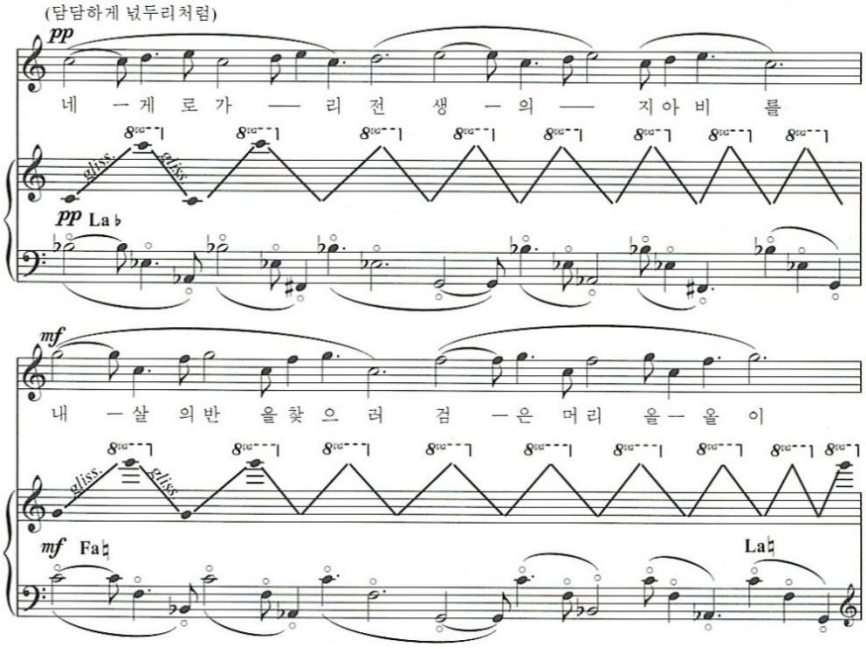
complementary. As the music becomes more emotional, the time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 to 6/4, the number of beats increasing until, in measure 17, the music becomes unmeasured again. Measure 17 is again a transitional moment between the second and the third parts, where two hands work together to create a shifting pentatonic idea combined with the Javanese mode on A (A, B-flat, C, D, E, F-sharp, G). While the left hand has block chords that descend in range, the right hand adds the F-sharp and B-flat of the Javanese mode, playing rapid arpeggios and shifting to a B-natural before the measure concludes on a fermata.



Example 11. Measure 17 of *A-Ga II*

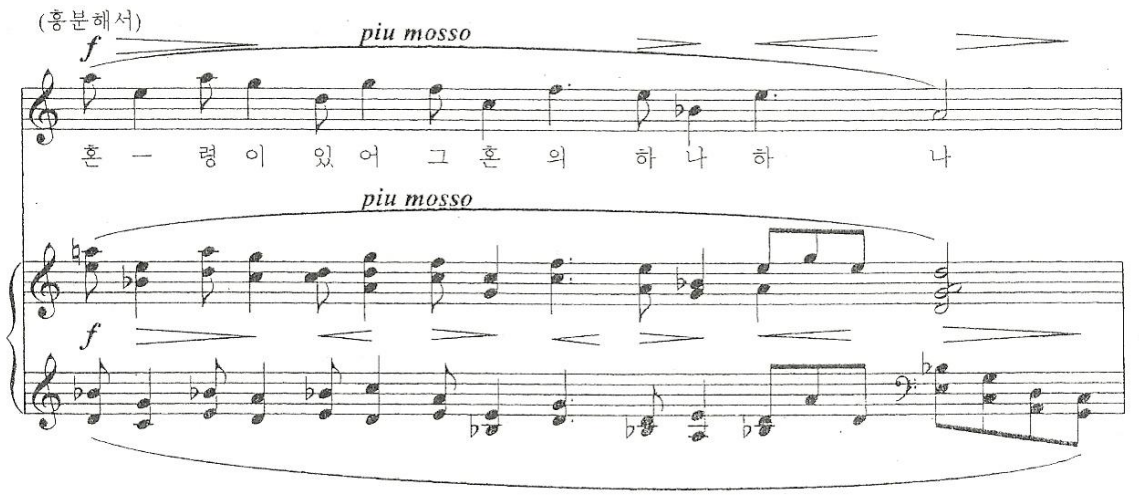
The cross rhythms dominate the measure in a ratio of 4:5 the (half or quarter notes in the left hand against five eighth notes in the right hand). All these pitch and rhythmic contents help to create the change of scene in the poem. In measures 18 and 19, the text talks of previous life, the underworld, and the spirit ("I will go to find my better half of the underworld—one half of my flesh. Each piece of the black hair has a spirit."). I see two possible scenes in this part of the poem. The first possibility is that the speaker is no longer fully conscious—but in a dream-like state—and traveling to the underworld in her

mind. The other possibility is that she is dreaming during this part. In either case, measure 18 prepares the mood effectively and also connects the music to the next section.



Example 12. Measures 18-19 of *A-Ga II*

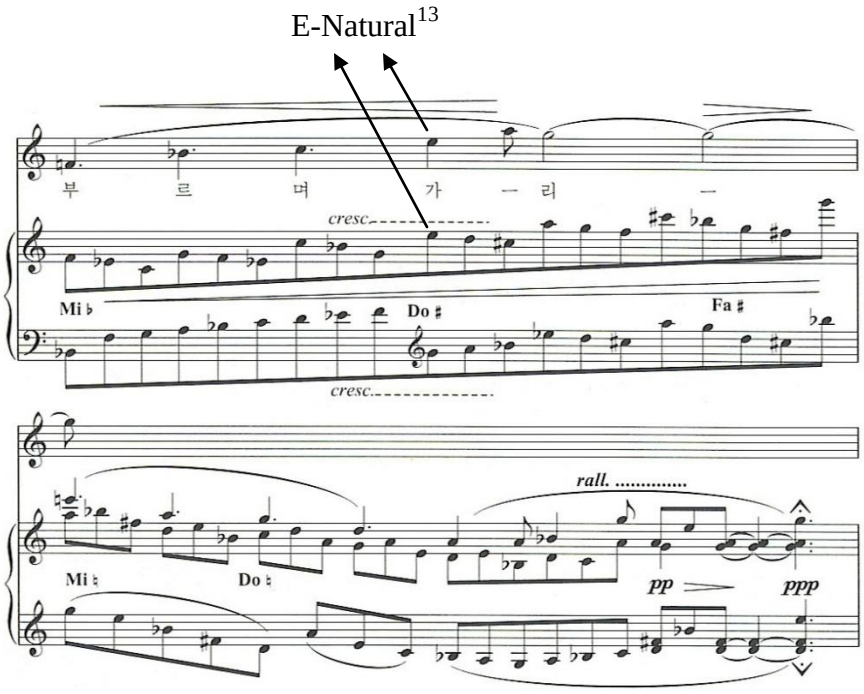
In the third part, the time signature disappears again. The harp creates a surreal mood as the right hand plays glissandos while the left hand plays harmonics again. Here we hear a sense of polytonality between the voice part and the bass part of the harp, although this could be viewed as a whole tone scale with an E-flat and G added (Ab-Bb-C-D-E-F#). The voice starts pianissimo, using the same rhythmic pattern for two measures with repetitive melodic figures (C-D-E, C-F-G). The vocal range gradually expands as the volume of the music increases, moving from a major third in measure 18 to a perfect fifth in measure 19. The bass part of the harp also expands outward from B-flat and A-flat to C and either F-sharp or G.



Example 13. Measure 20 of *A-Ga II*

In measure 20, the music returns to block chords signaling that the poet is back to full consciousness or back to the real world. Measure 20 is forte and excited (흥분해서), telling us that she is shouting out the words as someone coming out of a nightmare would do. Towards the end of the measure, the voice descends in range, and the rhythmic values increase as the excitement slows down because the poem calms down. Measure 20 is in Mixolydian mode on C, which shifts to the same mode on F at the beginning of the next measure. In measure 21, the poet shouts out the last words "I will go calling every one of them (spirits)," as the F mixolydian mode leads to a dodecaphonic idea where all twelve notes are freely used to form the harmony.[12]

[12] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording by phone, Seoul, Korea, 14 October, 2011.



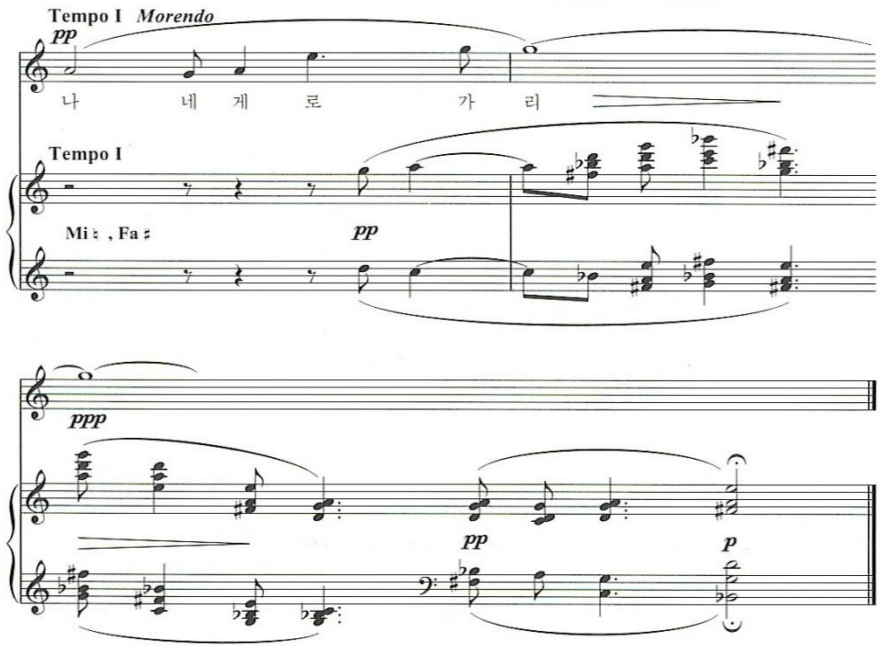
Example 14. Measures 21-22 of *A-Ga II*

In measure 22, E-flat changes to E-natural and C-sharp to C-natural, which leads the music back to the previous Javanese mode with an F-sharp and B-flat; after the voice concludes its phrase, the harp plays music similar to the prelude heard earlier.

The last part of the song (measures 23-24) is quite soft and marked Tempo I - *morendo*. The vocal line is reminiscent of the opening vocal material, and the harp part also borrows its materials from the prelude. In this coda we hear music that works like an echo in the air, concluding appropriately with a reprise of the opening line of the poem. Here there is more consistent use of the B-flat and F-sharp that strengthens the Javanese mode on A; in the left hand, we hear a quintal chord G – D with an added B-flat, while the right hand plays another quintal chord A – E with an added F-sharp. The quintal chord is a very popular harmony in Korean music that is based on its traditional music. In

[13] Young-Ja Lee, interview by phone, Seoul, Korea, 24 March, 2012.

summary, Lee has successfully demonstrated and fused her ability to combine musical elements of Korean traditional music with that of Javanese music.



Example 15. Measures 23-24 of *A-Ga II*

항구 (Harbor)

"항구" means "Harbor" or "Port" in Korean. A devout Roman Catholic, Nam-Jo Kim is famous for her love poems that are based on her Christian faith, which set her apart from other Korean poets of her era. As she explains:

> For me, the fellowship of Jesus and Maria the Magdalene is the source of my inspiration that will more than supply the needs of my entire artistic life. Just because one says, "Lord, Lord" does not mean it will become a poem. My love poems are poems of faith and poems of faith are love poems.[14]

[14] Interview with Nam-Jo Kim, *"Paran News"* http://media.paran.com/news/view.kth?dirnews=2841815&year=2009 (accessed 1 March 2011).

However, there are also a number of poems that are her personal and secular love confessions, although she has never revealed who the subjects of her love are. These poems are usually filled with regrets and yearning for unfulfilled love. In *Harbor*, Nam-Jo Kim uses "boat" and "harbor" as a metaphor for her search for a soul mate and her beloved, respectively.

> My little boat that has been drifting endlessly
> Left me again after touching me with its gunwale.
>
> Had I met one feeling cold or known with warm person with teary eyes,
> I would have left the boat at the water bank and came to the land.
> I would have let go of my boat to the seaway of ten thousand waves.[15]

Figure 5. *Harbor*, Poem by Nam-Jo Kim

This song was composed in 2004, thirteen years after Young-Ja Lee began to compose lyric songs again with the composition of *Three Love Songs on Poems by Nam-Jo Kim* for soprano and harp in 1991. During this period, her output flourished as the number of compositions more than doubled compared to her compositions of the previous thirty-eight years. Her works during this period included a number of chamber and solo instrumental pieces. An interesting change in this period is that she began to compose music for Korean traditional instruments. Some of the pieces are only for Korean traditional instruments, while others feature ensembles of both Korean traditional and Western instruments. She even went as far as composing a Concerto for piano and Korean traditional orchestra.

[15] English translation by Kyoung Cho.

Instrumental Music:

Quintet for Flute, Harp, and string trio
Solo Harp Tone Poem
Theme and variation for piano
Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano
Chamber music for string trio and Daegeum (Traditional Korean Large Bamboo Flute)
Elegy for Gayageum (Korean zither-like string instrument)
Theme and variation for two cembalos
Two Songs for Daegeum
Tryptique (Three-part work) for Flute, Clarinet, and Basoon
Song for Hoehyun Geomungo (Modified Korean Black Zither)
Chamber work for piano trio
Song for Gayageum Solo
Requiem for Daegeum Solo
Song for Daegeum and strings
Song for three Geomungo
Piano concerto with Korean Traditional orchestra

Vocal Music:

A capella 4 Voice Choral Work on Theme of Arirang
Cantata "Anthem for 50th Anniversary of Korean Independence"
Cantata "Anthem of the Musicians"
Cantata "20th Anniversary of International Music Festival"
Art Song "Green Song"
Art Song "Setting Fire on My Soul"
Song Cycle on Poems of Hae-In Lee
Song Cycle on Poems of Sang-Byung Cheon
Three-part Choral Work for Women's Chorus
Four-Voice Choral work with Piano and harp
Song Cycle "Elegy of My Soul"
Four-Voice Choral Work "Psalm 150"
Two Songs on poems by Hae-In Lee
Sacred Cantata for Soprano
Sonata for Soprano
Five songs for Soprano
Three-Part Choral Work for Women's Chorus
Cantata for Four-Voice Chorus with soprano, tenor, baritone soloists
Three-part Choral Work for Women's Chorus
Lyric Songs on the Poems of Nam-Jo Kim (including "Harbor")

Figure 6. Lee's compositions from 1991-2004

The major portion of her music during this period was vocal music, especially solo vocal works, including song cycles. Although she was expanding her compositional palette into Korean traditional music in her instrumental music, her solo vocal music moved in a different direction. Her songs shifted towards neo-romantic tonal harmony and avoided complicated technical ideas or complex structural forms. When she was asked about this, she responded:

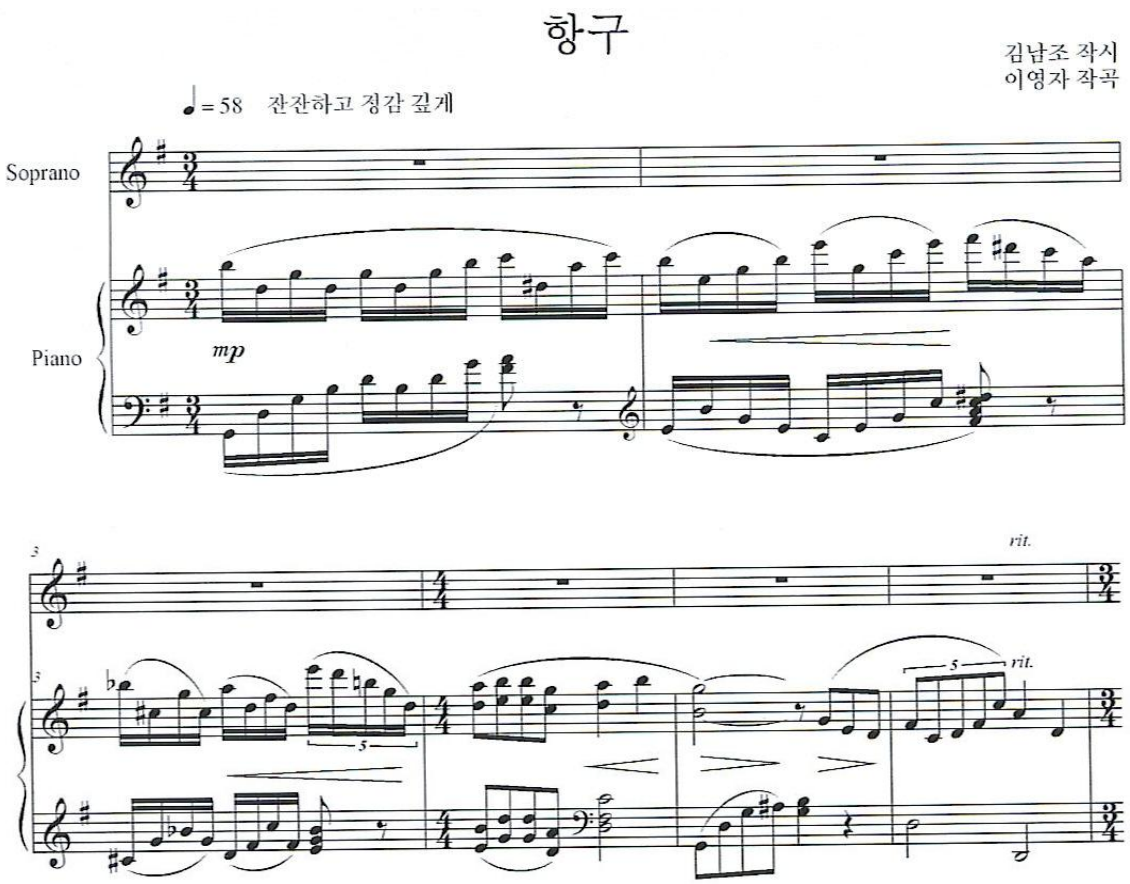
> As I got older and composed more songs, I came to a realization that songs must be written to serve the human being: voice, ear, mind, emotion, and soul. They should make the singer and audience comfortable and enjoy the text and music, rather than confused by complex technical ideas. It must reflect the idea of the poet.[16]

The focus of her songs now shifted to the emotional depth of the text, and as a result, they serve as her personal manifestation of her life and love reflected in Nam-Jo Kim's poems. Kim's story is now Lee's story, and her music is one with the poems.

The tempo marking of *Harbor* is ♩ = 58 (잔잔하고 정감있게 - Calmly and with affection). It begins in G major with a moderately soft six-measure piano introduction, stating arpeggios in both hands that prevail throughout the entire song. These signify the waves of the water, and several rhythmic patterns reflect the movement of water in the song. The Introduction contains patterns of four sixteenth notes and five sixteenth notes for each quarter note beat. While arpeggios reflect the moving waves, quarter note and half note block chords show the waves hitting the harbor and shore. In measure 4, the meter changes to and remains in 4/4 until the voice enters at measure 7, where the meter returns to 3/4. Also in measure 4, we hear open fifth chords in both hands and block

[16] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording in person, Seoul, Korea, 14 July, 2001.

chords that add contrast to the prevailing arpeggios. Throughout the introduction, the repeated diminished seventh chords appear frequently, creating harmonic instability in places. The waves of the water are effectively expressed in the introduction and the movement slows down gradually until the voice enters in measure 7. The harmonic progression, which began on G major moves to e minor, then ends in a half cadence on a D7 chord.

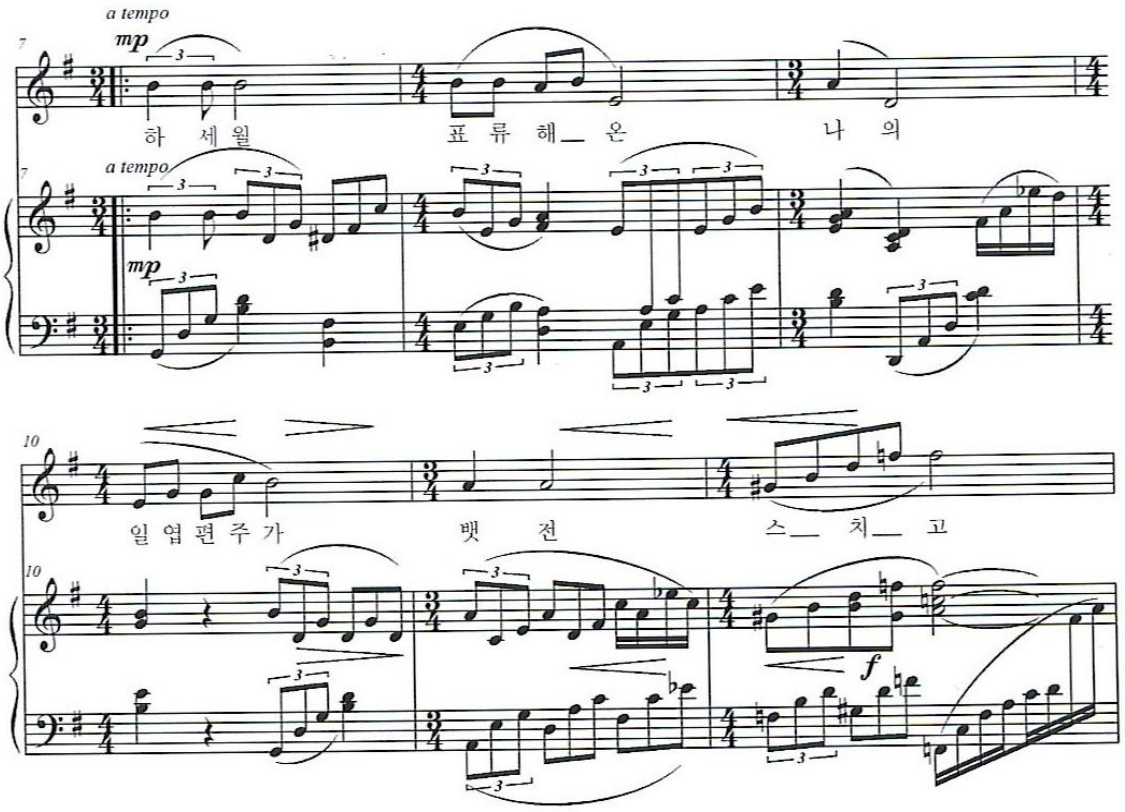


Example 16. Measures 1-6 of *Harbor*

The voice and the piano begin measure 7 with a similar rhythmic idea, but in the next measure the meter changes to 4/4 and while the piano remains in triplets, the voice

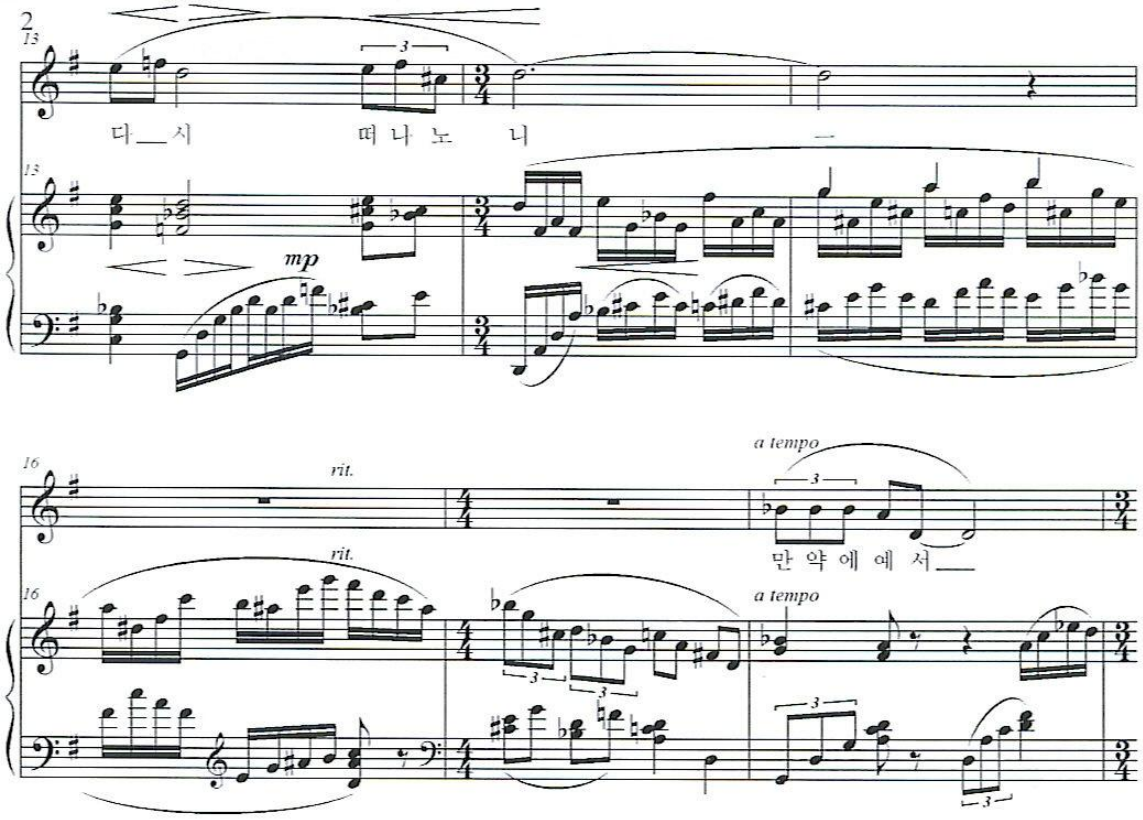
changes to duple patterns, which creates cross rhythms of two against three. Rhythmic contrast continues in measure 11, where the piano has three against four on the last beat.

Rhythmic variation (beats divided into two, three, four, or five notes) and constant metric change are the structural foundations of this song that depicts the continuing motion of the water and boat. It also signifies the continuation of time and life while the poet is looking back to her past and expressing her regrets. This rhythmic foundation is a very important feature of the song, because Lee's focus is on painting the picture of the harbor, and also on the emotional state of the poem. When coupled with the harmony that she adds, they eloquently evoke the emotion of the poem.



Example 17. Measures 7-12 of *Harbor*

The harmonic language Lee uses to create the scenic background and poet's emotion is rather simple, as the song contains little modulation and is not based on the complicated modes or unconventional scales heard in her earlier songs. What she provides is very colorful music that has repeated inverted diminished seventh chords, which do not always resolve, in which case, they are simply used to add color. This happens twice in measures 14-17 and also in measure 25.



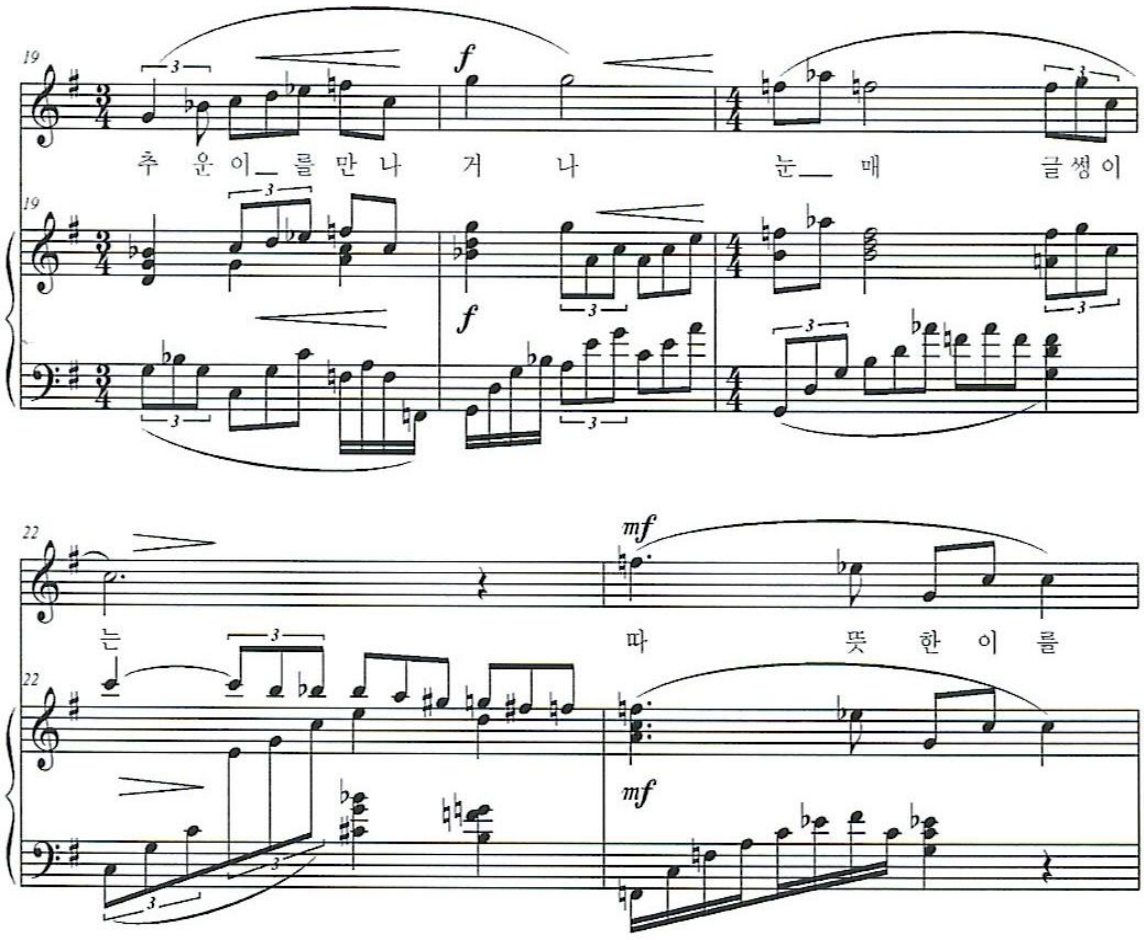
Example 18. Measures 13-18 of *Harbor*

Measures 18-24 show how effectively Lee uses the key changes that take place to reflect the poet's emotional turmoil at this point (Figure 7). Measure 14 is in D major, the

dominant to the initial key, and then the key changes to g minor by measure 18. At measure 21, it changes to C major, the subdominant, through the vii°7 of C chord. Then, it moves from a V7 of C to IV, which is a deceptive motion, in measure 23, adding the seventh to create a V9 of B-flat that resolves unexpectedly to a C minor chord.

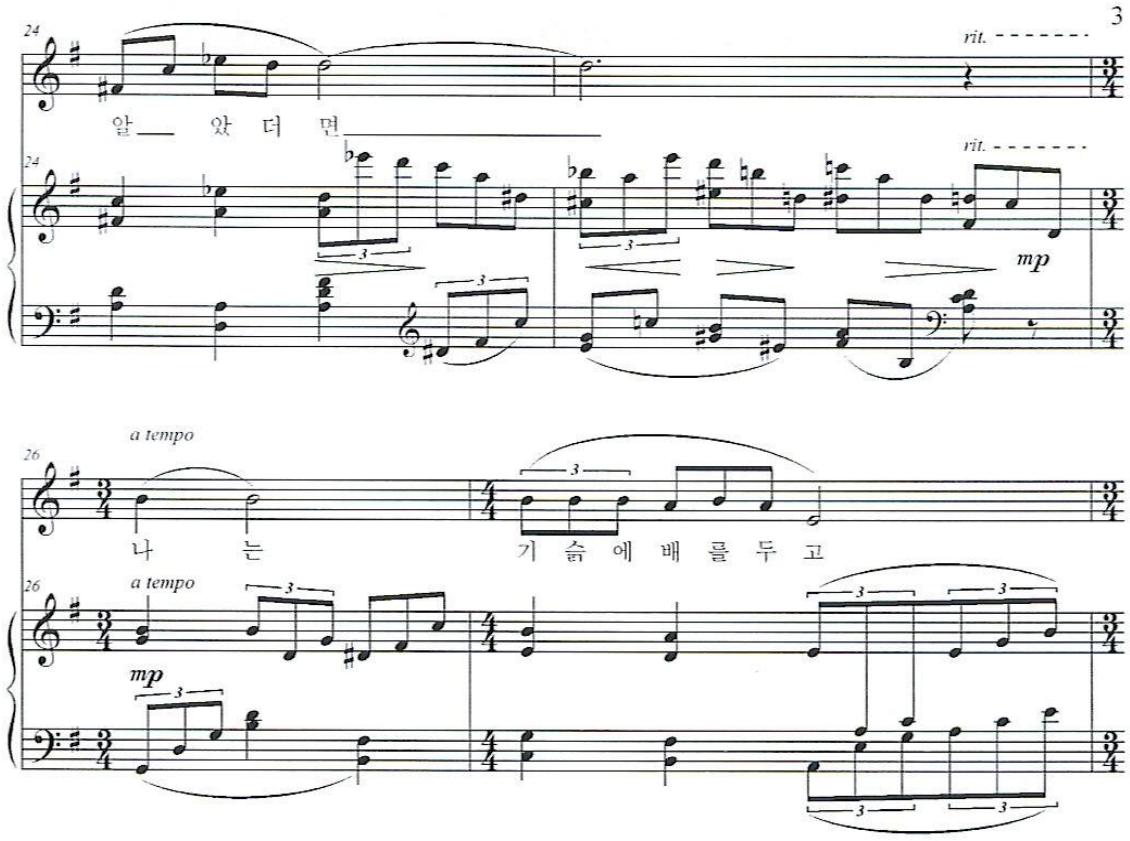
Had I met one feeling cold or known with warm person with teary eyes.

Figure 7. Text of Measure 18 – 24 of *Harbor*



Example 19. Measures 19-23 of *Harbor*

As mentioned before, the repeated and unresolved diminished seventh chords appear again in measures 24-25, leading the song back to G major in the next measure. While they appear to be unresolved, they are in fact resolved in a unique way as the resolution is done linearly by half step: D-sharp to D, E-sharp to F-sharp, and B to C. This is a linear progression rather than a functional one.



Example 20. Measures 24-27 of *Harbor*

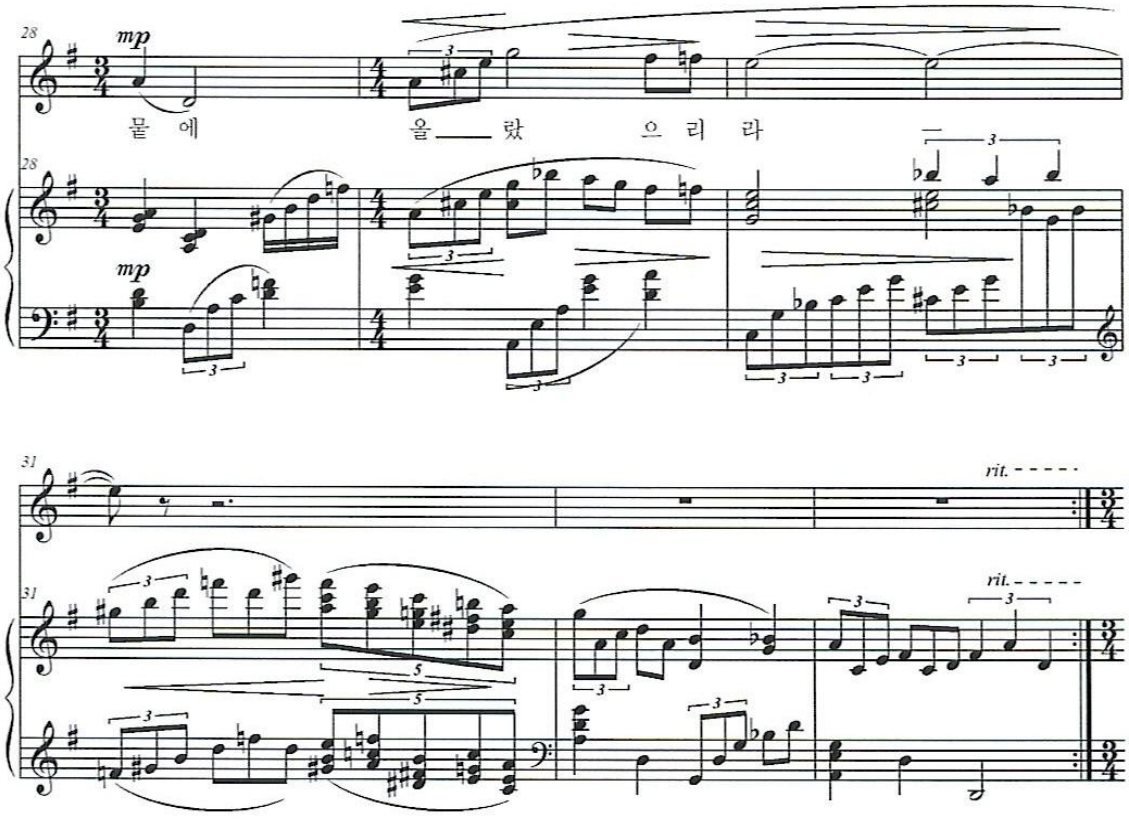
Measures 26-33 are a recapitulation of the first vocal phrase (measures 7-14). This passage also serves as an answer to the text. The first vocal line in measures 7-14 laments that she (her boat) has wandered endlessly in search of her special someone, whereas in measures 26-33 she confesses that she would have left the boat by the harbor

and come up to the land. She uses the same melodic lines to create a round structure for the song and closure to her search.

Measures 7-14 of *Harbor*
"My little boat that has been drifting endlessly
Left me again after touching me with its gunwale."

Measures 26-33 of *Harbor*
"I would have left the boat at the water bank and come to the land."

Figure 8. Comparison of the Text between the first vocal line and its recapitulation



Example 21. Measures 28-33 of *Harbor*

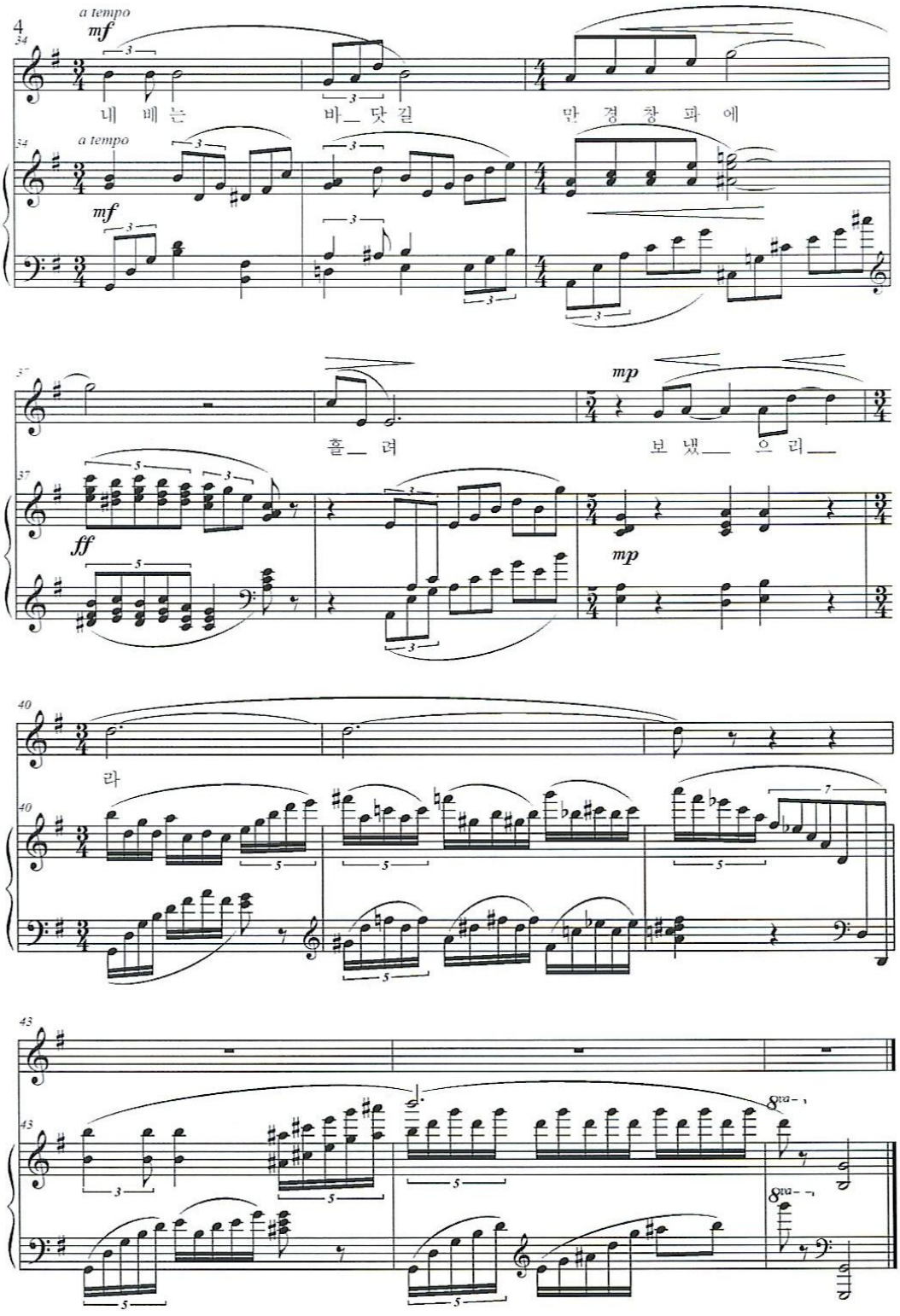
The recapitulation contains frequent secondary dominant chords, and some of their resolutions to the tonic are delayed to create a more sustained release of tension (measures 28-29 and 31). It is an effective method of creating the poet's sense of supposing that she "*would have* left the boat," and how she is recalling the past. The vocal line ends on a non-tonic chord, but the piano part in measures 32 and 33 is quite similar to the end of the piano prelude in its harmony, providing the feeling of the section coming to an end. After another half cadence, measure 33 leads us to believe that the song is about to end in the next measure due to a ii7 – V7 chord progression coupled with a ritardando.[17] However, Lee offers another line, which functions as a coda. It is a musical extension and an echo where the first melodic phrase is repeated again. While the music is quite similar to the opening vocal phrase, this time it ends on a tonic chord with the voice on the dominant note. In this coda-like section the poet confesses that she would have sent her boat away after she would have come to the land.

"I would have let go of my boat to the seaway of ten thousand waves."

Figure 9. Last Phrase of Poem, *Harbor*

In the postlude, the piano plays rapid arpeggios with several rhythmic contrasts between the two hands, illustrating the "ten thousand waves" of the water to end the song. We also hear diminished chords, which add harmonic instability. Lee once again eloquently expresses the conflicting emotion of the poem and concludes the song with the resolution to G major.

[17] She wrote a repeat sign at the end of measure 33, which takes the song back to measure 7 to re-start the song from where the voice enters. However, Lee advised that the repeat was offered as an option at the discretion of the performers (interview with Lee on February 15, 2011).



Example 22. Measures 34-45 of *Harbor*

During a phone interview on October 14, 2011, Lee explained that the water under the famous Saint Bénézet Bridge in the French city of Avignon inspired her to write the piano part of this song, and also how parts of the song appeared again in her piano sonata *Sur le pont d'Avignon*, written in 2009. Avignon was the birthplace of Olivier Messiaen (1908 –1992), her idol. He was indirectly the reason why Lee came to study in France. Lee's teacher, Un-Yung La, was invited to study with Messiaen until La was forced to give up the opportunity for political reasons. So when Lee found a chance to study abroad, La advised her to go to the Paris Conservatoire, where Lee had the chance to study with teachers who studied with Messiaen and also took classes taught by him. Lee confessed that Messiaen's music inspired and influenced her music tremendously. When she visited Messiaen's birthplace and stood on the Saint Bénézet Bridge, the movement of the water left a strong impression, which became manifested in *Harbor*. I argue that the lover unfound in this poem is quite possibly Messiaen, who to Young-Ja Lee, was her musical special someone.

Lee's music is purposefully simple in harmony, because she wanted to compose songs that would be soothing to the voice of the singer and the hearts of the audience. However, she expresses the poem and its passion with colorful harmony that evokes the scene and nostalgia of the text. The musical nature of this song in tone and color is quite similar to the songs by French composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as Debussy and Duparc, especially songs written to the poems of the French Symbolists. French Symbolism was a movement that favored spirituality, the imagination, and dreams;[18] it was also a reaction against realism, so the composer would

[18] Balakian, Anna, *The Symbolist Movement: a Critical Appraisal*. New York: (Random House, 1967), ch. 2.

write the music focusing on the background of the scene and emotion of the character. Impressionist music also defied the aesthetics of program music, relying on the tone color and sound effects created by frequent dissonance, chromaticism, modes, and non-conventional scales to illustrate scenes, moods, and emotions. As a result, color was the center of music for these composers, and this is precisely what Lee has achieved in *Harbor*. The simple nature of the song with the expression of tender, yet profound and pensive passion also reminds us of the music of Poulenc, particularly his piano work *Mélancolie*. During one interview, Lee stated that her music is all about piano and color.[19] This song has encapsulated the two pillars of her music in a simple, yet colorful sonata[20] with voice obbligato, one where the voice enhances the emotions of the poet and also that of the composer. Although Impressionism was conceived in reaction to Romanticism, musical impressionism seems today to be the culmination of Romanticism. Young-Ja Lee's *Harbor* is a fine example of a Romantic song written with the techniques and sounds from Impressionist music, one that offers insights into the nostalgia, melancholy, and life's sorrows of Korean women. She has masterfully created a song of "Korean Women" by fusing Western traditions with the personal emotions of Korean women.

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[19] Young-Ja Lee, interview by author, tape recording in person, Seoul, Korea, 24 July, 2011.

[20] Young-Ja Lee declares that her songs can be performed without the voice and may be called piano sonatas instead of song. "Therefore, my songs do not have piano accompaniment; rather, they are lyric poems for piano. So I believe it is fine to perform them as piano solos without voice. That means my songs could possibly be called "Sonata for Voice and Piano," "Ballade," or "Tone Poem."

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

For many centuries, foreign countries surrounding Korea have seen its occupation and/or political dominance as the key to securing power in northeast Asia. As a result, Korea has been the subject of countless foreign attacks, threatening the survival of the nation and its culture. The struggle to defend its existence, however, forced Korea to find the wisdom and resilience necessary to strengthen its identity, which became the true strength for the existence of the nation, people, and its heritage. Time after time, Koreans took in foreign cultural elements and fused them with their own traditional culture, thus creating something unique and clearly identifiable as truly Korean. At the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western music rushed into Korea, spreading quickly under the Japanese Imperial occupiers.

Although anything traditional and of Korean value was systematically eradicated by the Japanese occupiers, Korean composers became strongly committed to creating "Korean" music written with the values and emotions of traditional Korean music and literature. Ga-Gok held the most importance for Korean composers, because vocal music offers the opportunity to express the inspiration and personal message of the lyrics to the singer and to the audience. Poems with "Koreanness" include poems with Korean folklore; emotion that is uniquely Korean (Hahn); rural nostalgia; Korean ancient poems; Chinese ancient poems rewritten in Korean; and materials borrowed from pre-existing Korean folk songs. Koreans love singing. Throughout Korea's history, the people's love for vocal music has been strong, and it has become even stronger when they were faced with the oppression and hardship of foreign occupation and war.

Korean women endured virtually sub-citizen stature in Korean society for centuries until the social changes that began during the early twentieth century. Even to this day, the opportunity to pursue a career as a woman in Korean society is a challenging one, marred by prejudice and inequality. Despite the disadvantages placed upon them, Korean women composers have achieved a remarkable artistic success in creating music of their own perspective and artistic merits. Now they are the leading force of modern music in Korea, as well as a growing influence in the world of music.

The Music of Young-Ja Lee through her long career illustrates the history of Western music in Korea not only as a woman composer, but also as a composer who exemplifies the perseverance and will of all Korean composers to create music representing a strong Korean identity. Her music combines concepts from several cultures, including France, Indonesia, West Africa, Japan, and Korea, and one finds the accordance and harmony of several cultures in her music. The multiple layers of different Asian and Western styles that coexist and cooperate without compromising individual identity makes her an excellent example of musical interculturalism, and amongst Korean women composers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, she serves as a role model for other composers in the world of Western music.

Lee's vocal music is a microcosm of all her music, and offers the opportunity to look into the world of a Korean woman's reflections on life. For a composer such as Young-Ja Lee, whose life experiences have had a direct impact on her music, vocal music is the ideal medium to tell her story as a Korean woman. As an experienced composer of Ga-Gok, she has understood the importance of selecting the right poems for her creative inspiration, ones that tell the stories of her own experiences. In choosing poems by Nam-

Jo Kim, Lee has selected one of the most beloved poets in modern Korean literature, one who is renowned for her elegant and emotional poems that reflect the lives of Korean women. Lee found a deep personal affinity for Kim's poems at a young age, because Kim's poetry expressing her painful memories of the Korean War evoked the similar experiences that Lee had from the same war. Other poems by Kim also offered a deep artistic and personal connection to Lee. Selecting Kim's poems for her songs was a natural and ideal match.

The vocal music selected for this dissertation eloquently demonstrates the mastery of Young-Ja Lee's artistic and personal achievements. Technically, she has fused the musical elements of Korean traditional music with those of several other cultures, thus creating an intercultural music with balance and accord, yet with an individuality that is clearly evident in the color and the accompaniment. Thanks to her personal connection and sensitivity to the poems, she has successfully conveyed the stories and emotions of Korean women in her songs in simple language, yet with a deep and profound message: Korean women's nostalgia, melancholy, life's sorrow, love, and hope. She masterfully created songs of "Korean Women" by fusing the music of several cultures with the personal stories and emotions of Korean women.

The result has been the finest examples of Korean women's reflections on life, and an artistic achievement of the highest merits by a Korean composer: The Korean women's voice.

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